

Psoriatic arthritis more common than thought

There may be more people with a painful condition called psoriatic arthritis than previously thought, a study shows.

INTRODUCTION

Psoriatic arthritis is a condition that causes painful joints. It is linked to a skin condition called psoriasis, which causes a red, shiny rash. Both conditions are caused by inflammation.

Any joints in your body can be affected by psoriatic arthritis, but the most commonly affected are joints in the hands, fingers, toes, ankles, and knees. You may also have swelling of your fingers or toes, pitted or discoloured finger and toenails, and swellings at the back of your heel.

The numbers of people with psoriatic arthritis vary a lot around the world. Few people in Asia get it, while it is more common in Europe and among white people in the US.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS HOPE TO FIND?

The researchers wanted to know how many people in the central region of Norway had psoriatic arthritis.

WHO WAS STUDIED?

The researchers surveyed 94,000 people in a district in the central part of Norway, Nord-Trøndelag, who were aged 20 and over. The people were all taking part in a wider health study.

HOW WAS THE STUDY CONDUCTED?

People were asked if they had now, or had ever been, diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis, if they had psoriasis, and if they had two associated conditions, rheumatoid arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis.

People who answered yes to any of the questions had their medical records checked by specialist doctors to see whether it was likely that they had psoriatic arthritis.

WHAT DOES THE NEW STUDY SAY?

The study found that 361 people in the study had psoriatic arthritis. This equals about 7 in every 1,000 people aged over 20 in the Nord-Trøndelag region. This is higher than in other studies of psoriatic arthritis in Norway, which found only about 2 in every 1,000 people had the condition.

HOW RELIABLE ARE THE FINDINGS?

The study relied on people correctly answering the questionnaire questions. Some people might not have known whether they had the conditions, so the study could have under-estimated the numbers. On the other hand, not everyone who was contacted took part in the questionnaire. If people who answered were more likely to have health problems than those who did not, that could have led to an over-estimation of the numbers with psoriatic arthritis.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

Psoriatic arthritis may be more common than previously thought. If you are worried about painful, inflamed joints, you should see your doctor.

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Date summary prepared: January 2015

Summary based on research article published on: 20th August 2013

From: Hoff M, Gulati AM, Romundstad PR, *et al.* Prevalence and incidence rates of psoriatic arthritis in central Norway: data from the Nord-Trønderlag Health Study. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2015;74:60–64. doi:10.1136/annrheumdis-2013-203862LaySummary

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