Prevalence and Correlates of Metabolic Syndrome in Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis.


1Hospital Privado, Córdoba, Argentina, 2Instituto Reumatológico Strusberg, Cordoba, Cordoba, Argentina, 3Hospital Privado de Cordoba, Cordoba, Argentina, 4Instituto Modelo de Cardiología, Cordoba, Argentina, 5Consultorio, Tucuman, Argentina, 6Centro de Rehabilitacio´n II, Catamarca, Argentina, 7Hospital Jose Maria Cullen, Santa Fe, Argentina, 8Rheumatology Unit, Internal Medical Services, Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 9Hospital Provincial, Rosario, Argentina, 10Hospital Cullen, Santa Fe, Argentina, 11Centro Medico Privado, Tucuman, Argentina, 12Consultorio, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 13Sanatorio Parque, Rosario, Argentina, 14Universidad Nacional Tucumana, Yerba Buena Tucuman, Argentina, 15Hospital Privado, Cordoba, Argentina, 16Hospital Privado Co´rdoba, Co´rdoba, Argentina

Background/Purpose: Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) have increased morbidity and mortality due to cardiovascular (CV) disease. The screening of CV risk factors, metabolic syndrome (MS) among them, is therefore mandatory. The purpose of this study is to determine and compare the frequency of MS in patients with RA and a control group, and to assess the factors associated with MS.

Methods: This is a cross-sectional study involving 1033 (409 RA and 624 age and gender matched controls) patients, that were being followed at nine different medical institutions from Argentina. MS was defined according to the Adult Treatment Panel III (ATP III) and International Diabetes Federation (IDF). The relationship between demographic variables (age, gender), clinical data (disease duration, disease activity as per the DAS 28, presence of RF and/or ACCP antibody, presence of extra-articular manifestations), pharmacological treatment and MS was examined by descriptive statistics (the chi-square test for categorical variables and the Mann-Whitney test for continuous variables). Variables with p < 0.10 in these analyses were then examined by logistic regression.

Results: The frequency of MS in RA patients and the control group was 30% Vs 39%; p < 0.002 when defined with the ATP III, and 35% vs 40%; p < 0.1 when defined with the IDF. When both definitions of MS were applied, patients with RA and MS tended to be older (60.6 ± 10.9 age vs 54.3 ± 13.7 age; p = 0.001), to display higher values of erythrocyte sedimentation rate (22 mm/hr vs 18 mm/hr; p = 0.005), to be positive for RF and/or ACCP antibody (92% vs 86%; p = 0.057), to have extra-articular manifestations (35% vs 27%; p = 0.06) and to use hydroxychloroquine (11% vs 18%; p = 0.03). Other variables, such as gender, disease duration and activity and the use of methotrexate and biologic therapies did not differ between patients with and without MS.

Variables independently associated with MS in RA patients were age (OR = 1.03, 95%CI 1.01–1.06; p < 0.01 for ATP III, OR = 1.03, 95%CI 1.01–1.05; p = 0.001 for IDF), presence of RF and/or ACCP antibody (OR = 2.91, 95%CI 1.11–7.61; p = 0.02 for ATP III, OR = 2.37, 95%CI 1.09–5.16; p = 0.02 for IDF) and the use of hydroxychloroquine (OR = 0.48, 95%CI 0.23–0.97; p = 0.04).

Conclusion: In this study, we were not able to demonstrate a higher frequency of MS in RA patients. However, among RA those older patients who also display features of a more severe disease such as a positive serology and extra-articular manifestations seem to be at a higher risk
for the development of MS; while those on hydroxichloroquine seem to be at lower risk, probably reflecting the use of this drug in cases with a less severe disease.