Socio-demographic and clinical aspects of rheumatoid arthritis

Abstract:

To determine the socio-demographic profiles and some clinical aspects of patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA). DESIGN: Prospective, cross-sectional study. SETTING: Ambulatory out-patient clinics of Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH), a public national and referral hospital. SUBJECTS: Out of 180 patients interviewed and examined, 60 met American College of Rheumatology (ACR) diagnostic criteria of RA. RESULTS: Of the 60 patients recruited 52 (87%) were females with male: female ratio of 1: 6.5. The mean age of patients was 41.38(+-16.8) years. There were two peaks of age of occurrence, 20-29 and 40-49 years. In 75% of the study patients, one or more of metacarpophalangeal joints of the hand were involved in the disease. Other frequently involved sites were—wrist, elbows, knees, ankles and glenohumeral joints of shoulders in a symmetrical manner. Serum rheumatoid factor was positive in 78.9% while rheumatoid nodules were present in 13.3% of the study patients. A large majority of patients (88%) had active disease with 18% having mild disease, 38% moderate activity and 32% having severe disease. Only 12% of patients had disease in remission. Forty six point seven per cent (46.7%) of the study patients were on at least one Disease Modifying anti Rheumatic Drugs (DMARD) from a selection of methotrexate, sulphasalazine, hydroxychloroquine and leflunamide. The most frequent drug combination was methotrexate plus prednisolone at 30% of the study population; while 66.7% were on oral prednisolone with 25% of the study patients taking only Non-Steroidal anti Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDS). CONCLUSION: A large majority of ambulatory patients with RA had active disease. Most of them were sub-optimally treated, especially the use of DMARDs. About two thirds were on oral steroids. Sub-optimal therapy in relatively young patients, peak 20-29 and 40-49 years is likely to impact negatively on their disease control and quality of life.