Oral presentations
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Articular distribution, associated socio-demographic factors and the pattern of co-morbidities among rheumatoid arthritis patients attending the Rheumatology Clinic at Teaching Hospital Jaffna

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Background and Objective: Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a chronic systemic disease affecting the joints, connective tissues, muscles, tendons, and fibrous tissue. It tends to strike during the most productive years, between the ages of 20 and 40 years, and is a chronic disabling condition often associated with pain and deformity. This study aims to describe articular distribution, associated socio-demographic factors and the pattern of co-morbidities among RA patients attending the Rheumatology Clinic, Teaching Hospital Jaffna.

Methods: An institution-based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at the Rheumatology Clinic, Teaching Hospital Jaffna, on 409 known RA patients selected by systematic sampling. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used and data were analyzed by SPSS software (v21). Percentage, tables, and graphs were used to describe data. Chi-square test was used to analyze the association between variables.

Results: Mean age distribution was 50.7 ±14.56 years. The sample comprised mostly females (80.2%, n=328). Among participants, 66.3% (n=271) were housewives, and 72.9% (n=298) received financial support from a caregiver. Most lived in single-storey homes (94.4%, n=386) and used squatting toilets (58.9%, n=241). The majority had involvement of the wrist joint (78.3%, n=380), fingers (77.7% n=318) and knee joint (76.8%, n=314). About a quarter (26.4%, n=108) had a family history. In the sample, 20.8% (n=85) had diabetes mellitus, 23% (n=94) hypertension, 10.3% (n=42) hypothyroidism and 8.6% (n=35) dyslipidaemia. There were no significant associations between the pattern of RA and socio-demographic factors.

Conclusion: RA affects housewives, the working population, and elders, all of whom depend on caregivers, creating a burden on the family as well as the economy. In addition to involvement of joints, essential to carryout activities of daily living, RA patients suffer from co-morbidities, with implications for socioeconomic status.

Keywords: Rheumatoid Arthritis, Socio-Demographic Factors, Articular Distribution, Co-Morbidities