

ARCBITE

Brokering Innovation Through Evidence

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Comorbidities in People with Rheumatoid Arthritis



Rheumatoid Arthritis is a common chronic inflammatory condition which primarily affects people's joints.

Rheumatoid Arthritis is painful. It is associated with significant complications and consequences for the estimated 24 million people affected globally.

Rheumatoid Arthritis is often accompanied by other additional medical conditions (comorbidities) which can cause further challenges. It is important to establish the prevalence of comorbidities in people with Rheumatoid Arthritis to ensure appropriate health and social care service provision.

What was the aim of the project?

To investigate the prevalence of the range of different comorbidities that occur amongst adults with Rheumatoid Arthritis, and to investigate any moderating factors e.g. by age or by a country's income status

What did we do?

We conducted a systematic review. Our review followed recognised guidance and reporting standards and used a pre-determined search strategy as outlined in our review's published protocol.

We analysed the prevalence of different comorbidities in people with Rheumatoid Arthritis.

How did we involve people?

The review was commissioned by a clinician from one of our ARC NWC member organisations. A Public Adviser provided comments on our draft findings and report.

What did we find?

A total of 33 international studies were eligible for inclusion in our review.



We found

The three most common comorbidities in adults with Rheumatoid Arthritis were anxiety disorders (62%), hypertension (37%) and depression (32%). Depression was inversely related with age. People from lower-income-countries had a higher prevalence of depression than those from higher-income-countries. None of the identified studies fully explored health inequalities issues.

Conclusions

It is concluded that comorbidities are prevalent among people with Rheumatoid Arthritis, particularly those associated with mental health and circulatory conditions. Provision of health services should reflect the importance of such multimorbidity and the consequences for quality and length of life.

What next?

Further research should explore:

- the importance of different comorbidities in people with Rheumatoid Arthritis
- health inequalities considerations for people with Rheumatoid Arthritis and comorbidities
- the best ways to prevent, identify and manage different comorbidities in people with Rheumatoid Arthritis

Full report:

Hill et al., The prevalence of comorbidity in rheumatoid arthritis: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Br J Community Nurs.* 2022 May 2;27(5):232-241. <https://doi.org/10.12968/bjcn.2022.27.5.232>

What is NIHR ARC North West Coast?

The Applied Research Collaboration North West Coast (ARC NWC) is a partnership between universities, NHS, public, etc. Its mission is to undertake applied research to improve public health, wellbeing, quality of care & reduce health inequalities across the North West Coast region.

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