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Depression and coping strategies among adult patients with rheumatoid arthritis attending a tertiary care hospital in Sri Lanka

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Background: Depression is a less discussed major health concern among adult patients with rheumatoid arthritis in Sri Lanka. Estimating the severity of the problem will help to provide holistic patient care in future.

Objective: To determine the proportion of depression, its' associated factors, and coping strategies among adult patients with rheumatoid in Colombo South Teaching Hospital, Sri Lanka.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among systematically sampled 65 adult patients diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis ≥ 3 months duration. Ethical approval was obtained by the relevant Ethics Review Committees and the questionnaires were pre-tested prior to proper data collection. Interviewer-administered Brief COPE and DASS-21 were used as specific study tools to assess coping strategies and level of depression, after obtaining written informed consent. Pain was assessed using a numerical rating scale ranging from 0-10. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 15.0. Chi-squared test was used as the significance test. Level of significance was taken as $p < 0.05$.

Results: Mean age was 58.8 ± 9.6 years. The majority were females (83.1%, $n=54$), with rheumatoid arthritis (60.0%, $n=39$) having the disease for >2 years (58.5%, $n=38$). The depressed proportion was 52.3% ($n=34$). A percentage of 26.2% ($n=17$) had a pain score of 4. The majority had adaptive coping strategies (83.1%, $n=54$). There was no significant association between family support, presence of depression, and the type of coping strategy ($p > 0.05$).

Conclusion: Depression is a major health concern affecting adult patients with rheumatoid arthritis attending a tertiary care hospitals in Sri Lanka. Routine screening for depression is needed for early detection and management.