
ALEXITHYMIA, DEPRESSION, ANXIETY LEVELS AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN PATIENTS WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

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Objective: The aim of the study was level of anxiety, depression and alexithymia in patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Introduction: Alexithymia is defined as the difficulty in verbal expression of feelings. Alexithymia is more common seen in patients with chronic and temporary health problems.

Method: One hundred forty eight patients with rheumatoid arthritis and a hundred healthy subject were included into the study. The level of alexithymia was assessed with Toronto Alexithymia Scale- 20 (TAS-20). Depression and anxiety disorders severity and quality of life (QoL) were assessed Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), World Health Organization Quality of Life Assessment- Brief (WHOQoL-BREF), respectively.

Results: TAS-20 scores in patients group was higher than control group. The patients with rheumatoid arthritis had significantly poorer scores in all domains of WHOQoL-BREF ($p < 0.001$). BDI and BAI scores were greater than control group. There was no significant difference between patients with or without alexithymia in terms of sociodemographic features, treatment and scales scores.

Conclusions: The results of this study suggest that alexithymia is more common in patients with RA. Treatment of alexithymia may improve QoL, depressive and anxiety symptoms.

Key words: rheumatoid arthritis, alexithymia, quality of life