Outcomes Important to Patients with Early Rheumatoid Arthritis. A Qualitative Interview Study

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Background

- Broad use of patient-reported outcomes in Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)
- Focus upon important and meaningful outcomes from the patient’s perspective
- In an early stage of chronic disease acting on patients’ needs & prevention of long-term, more complex disease related consequences
- Better disease and treatment outcomes
- Contribution to patients’ daily functioning and well-being.
- Patient-preferred outcomes are understudied in early RA.

Objective

This study aims to explore the patients’ perspective on preferred outcomes in the early phase of their RA.

Methods

- A qualitative, explorative research design
- Participants included in the CareRA trial to a 400 patients multicentre randomised controlled trial across Flanders comparing different intensive combination strategies for early RA with conventional DMARDs plus step-down glucocorticoids

Results

- Study sample
  - Purposive sampling of 26 patients
  - Analysis based on 25 patients because 1 patient did not start treatment
  - 17 women and 8 men

- Demographic and clinical data (n=25)
  - Median (IQR)
  - Age: 51.4 years (Q1:43.5; Q3:58.5)
  - Time since initiation antirheumatic treatment: 4.8 months (Q1:3.3; Q3:6.1)
  - Global health (VAS 0-100): 18.0 (2.5-36.0)
  - Pain (VAS 0-100): 17.5 (1.5-40.0)
  - Fatigue (VAS 0-100): 35.0 (6.0-47.0)

- Data collection
  - Individual, in-depth, face-to-face interviews
  - 2 interviewers (KVDE & SM)
  - April-July 2012
  - Semi-structured interview guide
  - Field notes

- Data analysis
  - Qualitative Analysis Guide of Leuven (QUAGOL)¹
  - Interdisciplinary team discussions about concepts and reflections
  - Verbatim transcription of the audio taped interviews
  - Preparation of the coding process
    - Use of paper and pencil; holistic approach
    - Actual coding process
      - (1) Preparation of the coding process
      - (2) Actual coding process
        - Use of qualitative software program NVivo 9
        - Performed by 2 interviewees & 2 patients research partners with RA

Conclusion

- Categorisation of outcomes into 3 main themes: physical, functional and psychological well-being.
- One all-embracing outcome: quality of life as before RA onset.
- In early stage of RA important focus on pain relief and other physical symptoms & optimal physical functioning and mobility.
- Strong interaction between outcomes.
- Need for prospective quantitative research and implementation research to improve integration of patient-preferred outcomes in RA care.