Lifestyle habits in patients with established rheumatoid arthritis

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Background and aims
Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic disease that can have a profound impact on physical function and quality of life, but less is known about factors that mediates this impact. There is a current focus on healthy lifestyle habits in patients with RA, but little is known about the link between patients’ experience of lifestyle habits and quality of life.

The aim is to identify factors that already at onset of RA predict for later physical disability that could affect quality of life. Also to describe how patients with established RA experience the influence of lifestyle habits (physical activity, diet, smoking and alcohol) on quality of life.

Methods and results
Study I (published ref 1): Patients in the BARFOT cohort were sent a questionnaire 5–18 years after disease onset. Worse scores in function, pain, general health and tender joints at baseline increased the risk of self-reported disability at the time for the questionnaire.

Study II (submitted): With an explorative and descriptive design based on qualitative content analysis, twenty-two patients with RA (14 women and 8 men) were interviewed. The influence of lifestyle habits on quality of life resulted in the theme balancing between ideality and reality, with three categories: limitations, self-regulation, and companionship.

Study III: A descriptive qualitative design with a phenomenographic approach aiming to describe how patients with established RA perceive their quality of life. The material from interviews with twenty-two patients is under analyse.

Study IV: A quantitative study based on the same cohort and questionnaire as Study 1, but with the aim to study how lifestyle habits co-varies with quality of life 5-18 year after onset of RA in patients that at onset had different functional ability.

Significance
It is of great importance to increase the knowledge on how patients with RA use and understand their lifestyles in relation to their disease and how it affects quality of life in order to improve care for these patients. Quantitative and qualitative studies can complement each other and contribute to increased knowledge.

Publication