

Rheumatoid Arthritis and Fibromyalgia

To the Editor:

We read with interest the article by Coury, *et al*¹ and the accompanying editorial² recently published in *The Journal* on the influence of fibromyalgia (FM) in the activity and severity of rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Recently we conducted a similar, although less ambitious study³. We compared the activity of RA, measured by the Disease Activity Score (DAS)28, in a group of Spanish women with RA with and without FM, and we see similar results to those of Coury, *et al*.

We analyzed 53 women who met the criteria for RA who consecutively visited an outpatient rheumatology unit, 9 of whom also met criteria for FM. No patient had received biological treatment. The 2 groups were comparable in age, disease duration, acute-phase reactants (erythrocyte sedimentation rate and C-reactive protein), and number of swollen joints (Table 1). However, like Coury, *et al*, we found differences in the number of painful joints, the modified Health Assessment Questionnaire results, and the assessment of disease by the patient. Given the results of the study of Coury, *et al* and our own, we agree with these authors that the DAS28 overestimates the activity of RA in patients who also have FM, and that it should be used with caution in assessing disease activity and effectiveness of treatment in these patients.

Table 1. Characteristics and comparative study of patients with rheumatoid arthritis with and without fibromyalgia. Data are mean \pm SD (range).

	Without FM	With FM	p
No. (%)	44 (83)	9 (17)	
Age, yrs	60.8 \pm 15.1 (29–92)	64.0 \pm 14.4 (51–77)	0.644
Disease duration, yrs	3.6 \pm 3.5 (0–11)	4.8 \pm 4.5 (0–12)	0.448
VAS	39.7 26.6 (0–100)	56.2 \pm 21.0 (15–87)	0.048
ESR	28.1 \pm 16.1 (4–72)	30.8 \pm 17.3 (10–69)	0.484
CRP	1.38 \pm 3.10 (0.3–15.2)	0.66 \pm 0.42 (0.3–1.6)	0.725
mHAQ	0.46 \pm 0.48 (0–1.6)	1.44 \pm 0.43 (0.9–2.1)	0.000
TJC28	2.3 \pm 5.1 (0–25)	17.4 \pm 9.5 (5–28)	0.000
SJC28	0.8 \pm 1.8 (0–8)	1.1 \pm 1.4 (0–4)	0.129
DAS28	3.39 \pm 1.15 (1.78–6.85)	5.55 \pm 0.78 (4.43–6.99)	0.000

VAS: Visual analog scale of disease assessment by the patient; ESR: erythrocyte sedimentation rate; CRP: C-reactive protein; mHAQ: modified Health Assessment Questionnaire; TJC28: 28 tender joint count; SJC28: 28 swollen joint count; DAS: Disease Activity Score.

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