

Survey finds patients with RA their doctors not always on the same page

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Dr. Gibofsky is part of a global advisory panel that developed surveys for patients with rheumatoid arthritis and the doctors who treat them to see if they had similar views and perspectives. Credit: Hospital for Special Surgery

A large global survey finds gaps in communication between doctors who treat rheumatoid arthritis and their patients, even though most physicians believe good communication and patient engagement are important to achieve the best outcomes.

The research, "Understanding the Importance of a Patient's Role in the Management of RA: Physician- and Patient-Based Survey" was presented at the American College of Rheumatology/Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals annual meeting on November 13 in Washington, DC.

"Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a chronic, debilitating disease affecting 1.5 million people in the United States," said Allan Gibofsky, MD, a rheumatologist at Hospital for Special Surgery and senior study author. "The [survey](#) was launched to gain a better understanding of the similarities and differences in physician and patient perspectives, with the goal of improving patient care."

The RA NarRAtive Global Advisory Panel, a group of 39 rheumatology experts from around the world including Dr. Gibofsky, developed the surveys regarding RA treatment and management for both patients and health care providers. They were distributed in 15 countries between September 2014 and January 2016. More than 3900 patients and more than 1600 physicians completed the questionnaires.

Some of the survey findings:

- Among the doctors, 90% of respondents were satisfied with their communications with patients, however, 68% acknowledged, 'I wish my patients and I talked more about goals and treatment.'
- The majority of physicians believed that setting treatment goals and developing a disease management plan with their patients are essential for the successful management of RA. Yet, results from the patient survey revealed that few patients had shared their treatment goals with their doctor or realized they had a disease management plan in place.
- Only 53% of patients acknowledged that dialogue with their [health care provider](#) would optimize the management of their RA.
- 61% of patients felt uncomfortable voicing their concerns or fears to their doctor.
- RA remission was ranked higher in the physician survey than in the patient survey as a treatment goal. Patients were more likely to cite symptom reduction as a treatment goal.
- Overall, 88% of doctors agreed that patients who are involved in making treatment decisions tend to be more satisfied with their treatment experience; 74% felt that patients who are not involved are less likely to adhere to [treatment](#).
- Doctors and [patients](#) had similar views on what they would most like to change about currently available RA medications, including the severity of side effects, cost and efficacy.

"Studies show that good communication and the involvement of the patient in decision-making are critical to achieve optimal care," said Dr. Gibofsky. "The hope is that this survey represents the beginning of a road map to address deficiencies so we can ultimately improve [patient care](#)."

More information: Study Title: "Understanding the Importance of a Patient's Role in the Management of RA: Physician- and Patient-Based Survey"

Provided by Hospital for Special Surgery

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