

# Patients with rheumatoid arthritis have increased anxiety during pandemic

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For patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), anxiety increased during the

COVID-19 pandemic, as did suspected depression, according to a letter to the editor published online Jan. 27 in *Rheumatology*.

Takahiro Itaya, from Kyoto University in Japan, and colleagues examined the prevalence of anxiety and depression among RA patients before and during the pandemic. Outpatients with RA were enrolled from May 1, 2019, to Aug. 31, 2020; 108 patients completed the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale.

The researchers found that before the pandemic, nearly 9 percent of patients reported definite anxiety, and this percentage increased to 12 percent in 2020. Eight percent of patients reported doubtful anxiety before the pandemic, increasing to 15 percent in 2020. During the study period, patients reporting definite depression remained at 10 percent, while more patients reported doubtful depression in 2020. Anxiety during the pandemic correlated with the Health Assessment Questionnaire, biologic drug use, and the previous anxiety point ( $\beta$  [95 percent confidence interval], 0.21 [0.04 to 0.38], 0.20 [0.03 to 0.40], and 0.88 [0.53 to 1.23], respectively). There was a correlation noted for the depression point in 2020 with the previous depression point ( $\beta = 0.51$ ; 95 percent confidence interval, 0.21 to 0.81).

"Patients with high disease activity can become highly prone to [psychological distress](#) and should be offered focused care," the authors write. "As the pandemic fails to subside, more [patients](#) are likely to experience anxiety and depression, and the [health care professionals](#) must remain vigilant for these psychological changes."

Several authors disclosed financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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