

# Ultrasound can help patients with a type of rheumatic disease lead longer and healthier lives

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A [dissertation](#) at Umeå University shows that ultrasound can help patients with a type of rheumatic disease to live longer and healthier lives. These patients have so far had an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, which contributes to premature death.

Patients with a type of rheumatic disease called radiographic axial spondyloarthritis, a disease that causes changes in the bones in the pelvis and spine, have poorer health quality of life than control subjects.

"However, our investigations have found factors in these patients that, if changed, can help improve their health-related quality of life," says thesis author Lucy Law.

The thesis consists of 4 articles. In paper 1, patients had significantly lower overall health-related quality of life compared to the controls, especially in physical aspects. Factors such as longer duration of disease, poor physical function, high disease activity, and living alone were linked to lower physical health-related quality of life. Mental health-related quality of life was affected by fatigue, high disease activity, and living alone.

"We also saw some differences between the sexes in the patient group."

In paper 2, patients showed stiffness and less elasticity in a major artery in the neck compared to the control group. Disease-related factors and age were associated with these changes.

In addition, paper 3 revealed that patients, especially men, had thicker walls in this artery compared to controls. Blood tests showed that certain inflammatory markers were associated with this thickening, especially in men.

In paper 4, patients had thicker fat around the heart compared to the control group. In [male patients](#), fat-thickness is associated with [cholesterol levels](#).

"The knowledge gained from this thesis can help to optimize and individualize [patient care](#) and management, as well as reduce the effect that the disease has on the patient and society. This is important because there is currently no cure," says Lucy Law.

**More information:** Dissertation: [Subclinical cardiovascular disease and health related quality of life in patients with radiographic axial spondyloarthritis](#)

Provided by Umea University

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