Rheumatoid arthritis tied to higher risk for lung cancer

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Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is associated with a significantly increased risk for lung cancer, according to a study published online July 28 in *Arthritis & Rheumatology*. 
Rebecca T. Brooks, M.D., from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and colleagues evaluated lung cancer risk in people with RA and RA-interstitial lung disease (ILD). The analysis included 72,795 Veterans Health Administration patients with RA and 633,937 matched non-RA persons.

The researchers found that RA was independently associated with an increased lung cancer risk (adjusted hazard ratio [aHR], 1.58), which persisted in never-smokers (aHR, 1.65) and incident RA (aHR, 1.54).

Prevalent RA-ILD (757 patients) was more strongly associated with lung cancer risk (aHR, 3.25) than RA without ILD (aHR, 1.57) compared with non-RA controls. Results were similar for both prevalent and incident RA-ILD (RA-ILD versus non-RA: aHR, 2.88).

"RA was associated with a >50 percent increased risk of lung cancer, and RA-ILD represented a particularly high-risk group with an approximate threefold increased risk," the authors write. "Increased lung cancer surveillance in RA, and especially RA-ILD, may be a useful strategy for reducing the burden posed by the leading cause of cancer death."


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