

Misdiagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis

3 March 2008

In an article recommended by Annelies Boonen of Faculty of 1000 Medicine, researchers look at the way rheumatoid arthritis is diagnosed by analysing the administrative databases used by physicians in Quebec.

The authors of the paper, published in *Arthritis & Rheumatism*, report that general practitioners diagnosed 79% of the 10,001 rheumatoid arthritis cases but only 27% of patients then saw a rheumatologist. Half of these patients were seen in the first three months and of these it emerges that only 17% received confirmation they were actually suffering from rheumatoid arthritis.

Rheumatologist, Boonen says, "The low referral rates of cases with suspected rheumatoid arthritis to rheumatologists is worrisome, especially when considering the discrepancy in diagnoses between the initial diagnosis by the non-rheumatologists and the following diagnosis by the rheumatologists."

Boonen recommends further research to confirm the findings and explore the wider implications of the study. "If we really feel the window of opportunity for treatment of rheumatoid arthritis exists, rheumatologists should increase their efforts to raise diagnostic capabilities of first-line physicians towards early diagnosis and referral of suspected patients with rheumatoid arthritis".

Source: BioMed Central

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