

Higher disease activity scores in obese RA patients

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A new study presented today at the European League Against Rheumatism Annual Congress (EULAR 2014) showed that obese patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) have higher DAS (disease activity) scores than non-obese patients, irrespective of their disease stage.¹ With clinical remission as the ultimate therapeutic goal in RA,² several studies have demonstrated that treatment to target – a treatment approach guided by its impact on reducing DAS scores – is more effective in lowering disease activity and, ultimately, reaching remission than usual care.³⁻⁷ Because obese patients have inflated DAS scores, treatment to target protocols may result in them being treated more aggressively than non-obese patients, which would explain the inverse relationship between body mass index (BMI)* and outcomes in RA.†

"Increasing levels of body fat are associated with heightened production of proinflammatory signalling proteins and raised levels of inflammatory markers. This systemic inflammation could inflate standard DAS scores and mean that obese patients receive more aggressive treatment than their non-obese counterpart," commented Dr. Christopher Sparks, Institute of Ageing and Chronic Disease, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom. "Not only do these results provide an explanation for the paradoxical relationship between BMI and [disease](#) outcome in RA, they clearly support the benefit to all RA patients of early and [aggressive treatment](#)."

RA is a [chronic autoimmune disease](#) that affects 0.3-1.0% of the general population; approximately one in 100 people worldwide. It is more prevalent among women than men, and more prevalent in developed countries.⁸ The symptoms of the disease, which include persistent inflammation, can lead to irreversible joint damage.

In this study, clinical data from an international RA database were used to identify an early (eRA,

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