The prevalence of depression in rheumatoid arthritis: A systematic review and meta-analysis

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**Background:** There is substantial uncertainty regarding the prevalence of depression in RA. Depression has been associated with increased pain [1], fatigue [2], reduced health-related quality of life [3], increased levels of physical disability [4] and increased health care costs [5]. Depression may therefore be a useful target for interventions aimed at improving subjective health and quality of life in RA patients. However, prevalence estimates for depression in RA range between 9.5% [6] and 41.5% [7], making it difficult to establish the likely impact of depression in this patient group. We conducted a systematic review aiming to:

(i) describe the prevalence of depression in RA;
(ii) provide a summary of the methods used to define depression in RA and
(iii) explore the variables associated with depression in RA.

**Methods:** Web of Science, PsychINFO, CINAHL, Embase, Medline and PubMed were searched for cross-sectional studies reporting a prevalence estimate for depression in adult RA patients. Studies were reviewed in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines and a meta-analysis was performed.

**Results:** A total of 72 studies, including 13,189 patients, were eligible for inclusion in the review.

(iii) The main influence on depression prevalence was the mean age of the sample, with prevalence level increasing with reduced age.

**Conclusions:** Depression is highly prevalent in RA and is associated with poorer RA outcomes. This suggests that optimal care of RA patients may include the detection and management of depression.

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**References:**