

## TYPE OF STRESSOR AND DEPRESSIVE MOOD IN PATIENTS WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS<sup>1</sup>

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*Summary.*—The relationship of two types of stressors to depressive mood was investigated in 54 patients with rheumatoid arthritis. Depressive mood was associated with disease-related stressors (pain, effects of disease on daily activities) but was unrelated to major life events.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic, disabling disease affecting approximately 1% of the adult population. It is characterized by pain, stiffness, and physical disability.

In a general population, life events have been shown to be associated with depressiveness. In patients with rheumatoid arthritis, the association between physical disability and psychological well-being tends to be moderate (1). The present study investigated the relationship of two types of stressors (life events and disease-related stressors) to depressive mood in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

Fifty-four consecutive outpatients with classical or definite rheumatoid arthritis, who came for their regular checkups to the Rheumatology Clinic of the University Hospital, were participants (mean age, 56.9 yr.; mean duration of disease, 16.3 yr.; the sex ratio was 3 men to 7 women). Patients completed two questionnaires, the IRGL (Inloed Reuma op Genondheid en Leefwijze [Impact of Rheumatic Disease on Health and Lifestyle]) (2) and the Dutch version of the Life Experience Survey developed by Sarason. Pain, depressive mood, and effects of disease on daily activities (e.g., work, household, leisure) were assessed with the former measure. The number of life events excluding disease-related events (e.g., hospitalization) was measured with the latter.

Analysis indicated that life events ( $M = 2.9$ ,  $SD = 2.2$ ; range 0–8) were not associated with depressive mood (Spearman correlation .08, ns). Effect on daily activities was positively associated with depressive mood (Pearson correlation .41,  $p = .002$ ) and tended to be correlated with pain (Pearson correlation .24,  $p = .09$ ). These results suggest that of the two types of stressors investigated only disease-related stressors are involved in the depressive mood of these patients.

### REFERENCES

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