

Factors influencing physical activity in patients with rheumatoid arthritis

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Background

Physical exercise is safe and beneficial for people with rheumatoid arthritis (RA)¹. Studies show that most people with RA are physically inactive¹⁻³, and at the same time, increasing physical activity in RA patients is a challenge⁴. However, only a few studies assessed factors influencing physical activity in RA. **Our study aimed to identify the potential enablers and barriers to physical activity in people with RA.**

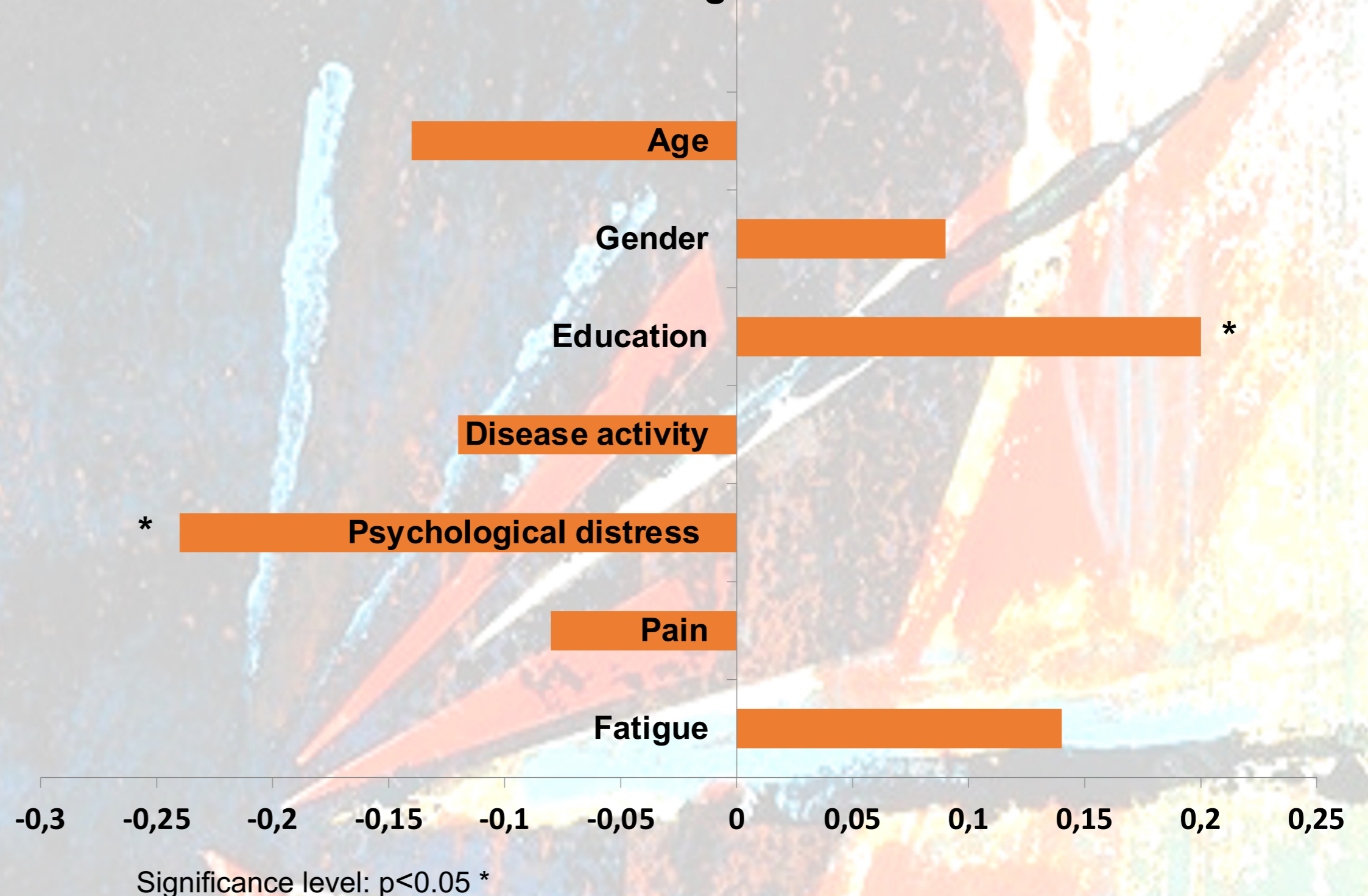
Methods

We included 146 RA patients (84.9% female; mean age 56.56±13.59 years; mean disease duration 19.59±9.15 years). All participants completed the General Health Questionnaire–28 (GHQ-28), the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) Pain, the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) Fatigue, and the Physical Activity Scale (PAS). Multiple linear regression analysis was used to analyse the data.

Results

We found that 78% of RA patients have less physical activity than the minimum amount recommended by WHO, with female patients being less active (80%) when compared to males (67%). Psychological distress ($\beta = -0.24$; $p < 0.05$) and lower education level ($\beta = 0.20$; $p < 0.05$) were significantly associated with physical inactivity. The total explained variance in the final model was 14.0%. Surprisingly, no association was found between age, gender, disease activity, pain, fatigue and physical activity.

Standardized beta coefficients of the associations between variables under study and physical activity in the final regression model



Conclusion

As most RA patients are physically inactive, interventions to support an active lifestyle and effective weight management are needed. Psychological distress may represent one of the key barriers to engaging in physical activity. Targeting RA patients with lower education levels and higher psychological distress could be an effective option to improve physical activity. The associations revealed in our study may inform intervention development to encourage behavioural change

References:

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