

Rheumatoid Arthritis

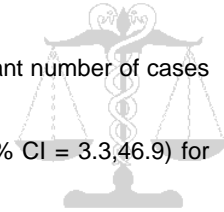
TMHuusko et al Annals of Rheumatic Diseases May (2001) Vol. 60 #5

A study into the risk of hip fracture associated with rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

An uninterrupted series of 517 hospital diagnosed hip fractures were investigated by inspection of medical records. The rate of RA in hip fracture case was compared with the prevalence of RA in the local community.

Most cases were beyond retirement age and 70% were women. However a significant number of cases were of working age.

The relative risk of hip fractures (caused by falls) among RA cases were 12.5 (95% CI = 3.3,46.9) for women and 15.9 (95% CI = 2.3,109.6) for men aged less than 65.



Comment

Although the confidence in these reported relative risks is not high, it would indicate a higher duty of care should be owed to sufferers from RA. Slips and trips... remain the most frequent cause of accidents at work.

Closer inspection suggests a wider problem. The authors suggest that the cause of the increased risk is reduced bone strength caused by the use of corticosteroids as part of the treatment for RA. If this is the case, other (long-term) users of corticosteroids may also be at increased risk.

The study did not specifically set out to address the occupational setting. Further studies of this risk group are expected to follow.
