

AWAI-Allaf et al. Rheumatology. March (2001) Vol.40 #3 p 262.

Does physical trauma have a causal role in the onset of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)? If it becomes accepted that trauma may aggravate or accelerate RA then compensation claims may be anticipated.

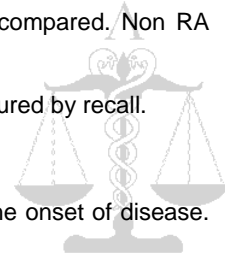
Case control study.

262 cases of RA attending as outpatients and 262 in non RA out-patients were compared. Non RA included Cardiology, ENT, ophthalmology, Gastrological, Dermatology....

Trauma was defined as; severe fall, RTA, fracture, surgery or the like and was measured by recall.

RA was diagnosed according to ACR criteria.

21% of RA cases could recall significant physical trauma within 6 months prior to the onset of disease. Only 6.5% of controls could.



Comment

The result suggests that a prospective study may be needed in order to properly assess this apparent association.

The study could be criticised for the relevance of the control group. The biological plausibility of impact injuries being a causal factor for heart disease is not immediately apparent.

Studies from other countries tend to find around 2% to 3% of RA cases have recollection of trauma. If this figure is compared with the results for the control population used here, this would make trauma appear to be a protective factor against RA.

Temporality of event and effect is (or should be) only one aspect of the full test of causation, however, this test is often used (and relied upon) in claims for upper limb disorder.