

Measuring Social Engagement in Rheumatic & Musculoskeletal Diseases

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OBJECTIVE

To evaluate existing measures of social engagement validated for use in Rheumatic & Musculoskeletal Disease populations.



BACKGROUND

Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) result in reduced social well-being and social engagement. Despite being an important outcome for patients, social engagement is rarely measured. We aimed to evaluate existing social engagement measures used in RMD populations.

METHODS

Qualitative systematic review [unrestricted date-January2023] of the key impacts of RMDs on social engagement.

Quantitative Systematic review [unrestricted date-February 2022] evaluated how existing instruments measure social engagement

Key findings from the qualitative analysis mapped against the existing measures.



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RESULTS

From 2601 records screened, we identified 30 eligible qualitative papers. Most studies were in Rheumatoid Arthritis populations ($N=16$). Other studies included Ehlers Danlos ($N=3$), Ankylosing Spondylitis ($N=1$), Fibromyalgia ($N=2$), Lupus ($N=3$), Chronic Back Pain ($N=1$), Psoriatic Arthritis ($N=1$), Gout ($N=1$), Vasculitis ($N=1$). Thematic analysis highlighted barriers and facilitators of social engagement in RMDs.

From 7772 records screened we identified 15 specific social engagement measures validated in RMD populations. Measures focused on measuring frequency, satisfaction, difficulty, and modification of social engagement.

Table 1 outlines how many existing measures consider the key impacts of RMDs on social engagement. There was an absence of consideration of how more nuanced aspects of living with an RMD impacts on an individual's level of social engagement.

Table 1. Barriers and facilitators in RMDs

	Sub-themes	No. of measures
Barriers		
RMDs & associated treatments	Disease Activity	2
	Pain	1
	Fatigue	0
	Mood	2
	Body image	3
	Medication side effects	0
Practical issues	Planning	1
	Difficulty	12
	Prioritising work	0
Social Networks & Roles	Isolation	1
	Invisibility of illness & lack of understanding	0
	Loss	0
	Impacts on significant others	8
	Overprotection	0
	Changing roles	7
Facilitators		
Well-being benefits	Social Interaction	8
	Distraction	0
	Enjoyment	3
Resilience & Acceptance	Learning to live with it	0
	Getting on with it	0
Activity Adjustment	Pacing	0
	Planning	3
	Digital Interaction	1

CONCLUSION

Existing measures of social engagement do not assess the range of impacts identified as important to patients with RMDs.

1

Individuals with RMDs experience a wide range of barriers and facilitators in relation to undertaking social engagement.

2

Existing validated measures of social engagement in RMD populations measure the construct in a limited way.

3

There is a need for a new social engagement measure to improve health and social outcomes for people with RMDs.