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# ”To regain one’s health” – Patients’ preferences of treatment outcomes in early rheumatoid arthritis - a qualitative study



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## Conclusion

Patients’ preferred treatment outcomes in eRA were to regain one’s health including both external and internal control.

A better understanding of patients’ expectations from the treatment is needed to enable a person centered approach in clinical practice.

## Background

Rheumatology care strives to identify and meet the needs of the patients, and to understand disease and treatment impact from the patients' perspective. A better understanding of patients’ expectations from the treatment is needed to enable a patient centered approach in clinical practice.

## Aim

To explore patients’ preferred treatment outcomes in early rheumatoid arthritis (eRA).

## Methods

A qualitative multicenter study. Individual interviews were conducted with 31 patients with eRA, defined as disease duration of  $\leq 1$  year and disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs) treatment for 3-6 months<sup>1</sup>. Interviews were analyzed using the Qualitative Analysis Guide of Leuven (QUAGOL).

Table 1. Socio-demographic and clinical characteristics

Characteristics	Participants (31)
<b>Gender Female/Male (n)</b>	22/9
<b>Age Median (Range)</b>	56 (38-80)
<b>Disease Duration (Months)</b> Median (Range)	5 (3-9)
<b>Dmard Treatment (Months)</b> Median (Range)	5 (3-7)
<b>Civil Status (n)</b> Co-habiting/Living alone	27/4
<b>Education Level (n)</b> Primary School/Secondary/University	8/15/8
<b>Employment (n)</b> Employed/Student/Unemployed/Retired	14/1/3/13
<b>VAS Pain (mm)*</b> Median (Range)	27 (0-70)
<b>VAS General Health (mm)*</b> Median (Range)	26 (0-80)
<b>VAS Fatigue (mm)*</b> Median (Range)	30 (0-95)

\* VAS scale 0-100 best to worse

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## Results

The patient-preferred treatment outcomes in eRA were described in the core category “to regain one’s health” and the four related concepts: to experience external control of the disease, to experience independence, to regain identity and to experience joy in everyday life (Table 2).

Table 2. Results

Core category	“To regain one’s health”			
<b>Concepts</b>	To experience external control of the disease	To experience independence	To regain identity	To experience joy in everyday life
<b>Sub-concepts</b>	Controlling the symptoms	Regaining former activity levels	Participation	Vitality
	Absence of disease	Experiencing autonomy	Empowerment	Believing in future
		Using active coping strategies	Self-image	

## References:

<sup>1</sup> Van der Elst, K., Bremander, A., De Groef, A., Larsson, I., Mathijssen, E. G. E., Vriezolk, J. E., ... van Eijk-Hustings, Y. J. L. (2019). European Qualitative research project on Patient-preferred outcomes in Early Rheumatoid Arthritis (EQPERA): rationale, design and methods of a multinational, multicentre, multilingual, longitudinal qualitative study. *BMJ Open*, 9(3), e023606. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-023606>



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