

Introduction

- Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic autoimmune disease characterised by persistent inflammation primarily affecting the joints but also impacting multiple extra-articular organs such as the heart, kidneys, lungs, digestive system, and nervous system
- RA leads to debilitating symptoms, including pain, stiffness, fatigue, and reduced mobility, ultimately causing long-term disability and reduced quality of life
- Given the expanding burden of RA in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), it is crucial to understand the economic impact of the disease in these regions

Purpose

- The aim of this systematic review was to synthesise the economic impact of RA on households, health systems, and society in LMICs

Methods

- Electronic databases such as PubMed, Web of Science, and CINAHL were searched using keywords related to RA and cost of illness
- Eligible studies were required to report RA-related costs, conducted in LMICs, and published in English
- Quality appraisal of the included studies was carried out using the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS) for cohort studies. A narrative synthesis of findings was performed

Results

- A total of 5,134 studies were initially identified for screening.
- After removing 1,028 duplicates, 50 studies were selected for full-text review, and 15 met the eligibility criteria and were therefore included in the review
- These studies, published between 2007 and 2024, originated from countries including Turkey (n=3), China (n=2), Thailand, Hungary, Mexico, Colombia, Morocco, Pakistan, India, Romania, Brazil, and Argentina
- Nine studies adopted a societal perspective, while six used a healthcare perspective.
- The total sample size was 218,575 participants, with individual study sizes ranged from 62 to 209,292
- Average annual direct costs per patient ranged from US\$523 to US\$2837.9, and indirect costs ranged from US\$81.8 to US\$2463.4

Conclusion

- In LMICs, the economic burden of RA is high due to limited healthcare resources, with patients facing unaffordable costs for treatment and medications
- Improving treatment access and optimising healthcare resources can reduce both direct and indirect costs, enhancing health outcomes of individuals with RA and promoting economic stability

References

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