

Ramadan Fasting and Rheumatoid Arthritis

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Objective: To study the effect of Ramadan fasting on patients with Rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Methods: Thirty one patients with rheumatoid arthritis divided into a fasting group (n=17) and a non-fasting group (n=14) were assessed clinically for disease activity (morning stiffness, number of painful and swollen joints and grip strength), laboratory variables (Erythrocyte sedimentation rate, hemoglobin and leukocytes count) and patients global assessment, initially and at the end of Ramadan.

Results: The rheumatoid patients in the fasting group had a mean age of “46years”, disease duration of three and a half years” and mild disease activity. The majority of them were in functional class I. Those in the non-fasting group had a mean age of 50 years, mean disease duration of five years and moderate-disease activity, 57.2% of them were in functional class II. There were significant improvement ($p<0.05$) both in clinical and in global patient assessment in the fasting group at the end of Ramadan. Apart from number of painful joints, the non-fasting group showed no significant clinical improvement at the end of Ramadan. Laboratory variables were not changed significantly in both groups in Ramadan.

Conclusion: Ramadan fasting may impart a clinical improvement in rheumatoid patients with mild course. Further studies are required with better patient selection in respect to duration and activity of the disease, functional ability and drugs regimens.