Background and aims

Although both systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) and rheumatoid arthritis (RA) may lead to the joint deformity, different characteristics such as the absence or the presence of bone destruction have been recognised as well. We aimed to clarify the difference of joint and tendon involvements between SLE and RA patients by using ultrasonography (US).

Methods

Fifteen SLE with joint symptoms and 40 RA patients, who were treatment-naïve, were enrolled in this study. The wrist, metacarpophalangeal and proximal interphalangeal joints and related extensor/flexor tendons were ultrasonographically examined. Their joints and tendons were evaluated using a grey-scale (GS) for synovial thickening and synovial fluid retention, and power Doppler (PD) for blood flow according to a semiquantitative method based on a scale of grades 0 to 3, and patients graded with GS ≥2 or PD ≥1 were judged as having joint or tendon involvement.

Results

Joint involvement was comparably observed in patients with SLE and RA (80% versus 95%, p = 0.119). However, tendon involvement was more frequent in SLE than in RA (93% versus 65%, p = 0.045), especially in the wrist joints (73% versus 40%, p = 0.037). Moreover, when we investigated the intensity of US findings, the joint involvement score (GS+PD) per affected joint was lower in SLE than RA (2.0 versus 2.6, p = 0.019), although tendon involvement score was similar (2.1 versus 2.2, p = 0.738).

Conclusions

As compared with RA, joint involvement is less intense and tendon involvement is more frequent in SLE with articular symptoms.

Methods

Average laboratory analysis costs for patients admitted for one day hospitalisation and prolonged hospitalisation, standard deviation for each category were calculated for one year on different subtypes of CLE.

Results

The average laboratory analysis cost was 19 €/patient/1 day hospitalisation for previously diagnosed cases and 26 € for new cases (with cutaneous biopsy). Remarkable differences were observed in the individual laboratory analysis costs between patients. No uniform pattern was noticed in each category. The cost of the laboratory analysis panel recommended by the European Guidelines for CLE is 150 €/patient, comparing with the highest average value of 77.5 €/patient for prolonged hospitalisation.

Conclusions

The results suggest a remarkable difference in the costs of laboratory analysis for each patient with CLE (for 1 day or for prolonged hospitalisation) admitted in the hospital despite the existing protocol. A lack of uniform standardised pattern was observed among all patients with different diagnoses of LE.

This shows an adapted version of the European guidelines for CLE in some European countries where the healthcare budget may be less extended and also a lack of knowledge regarding the existing protocol for CLE investigations.