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Journal of clinical rheumatology : practical reports on rheumatic & musculoskeletal diseases • Volume 26, Issue 7S Suppl 2, Pages S139 - S147 • 1 October 2020

Document type

Article

Source type

Journal

ISSN

15367355

DOI

10.1097/RHU.0000000000001131

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# Prevalence of Rheumatic Diseases and Quality of Life in the Saraguro Indigenous People, Ecuador: A Cross-sectional Community-Based Study

Guevara S.V.<sup>a</sup>, Feicán E.A.<sup>b</sup>, Peláez I.<sup>c</sup>, Valdiviezo W.A.<sup>d</sup>, Montaleza M.A.<sup>e</sup>, Molina G.M.<sup>f</sup>, Ortega N.R.<sup>f</sup>, Delgado J.A.<sup>g</sup>, Chimbo L.E.<sup>h</sup>, Hernandez M.V.<sup>i</sup>, Sanin L.H.<sup>j</sup>, Cervera R.<sup>k</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> From the Medicine Faculty, Universidad de Cuenca, Ecuador and Doctorat de Medicina, Universitat Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

<sup>b</sup> Autoimmune Disease, Hospital José Carrasco Arteaga, Cuenca, Ecuador

<sup>c</sup> Rheumatology Unit, Hospital General de Mexico "Dr. Eduardo Liceaga, México City, Mexico

<sup>d</sup> Hospital Homero Castanier Crespo, Azogues, Ecuador

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## Abstract

Rheumatic diseases are more prevalent and aggressive in indigenous population groups, providing medical attention for which poses a challenge for the rheumatologist. OBJECTIVE: To estimate the prevalence of musculoskeletal (MSK) disorders and rheumatic diseases in the Saraguro indigenous people in Ecuador, as well as to identify the main factors associated with the health status of this population. METHODS: This observational, cross-sectional study focused on the

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community was conducted using the COPCORD (Community-Oriented Program for Control of Rheumatic Diseases) methodology. The required data were obtained using the following instruments: (1) a screening for MSK disorders and rheumatic diseases; (2) a sociodemographic questionnaire; (3) a functional capacity Health Assessment Questionnaire Disability Index questionnaire; and (4) the quality of life EQ-5D-3L (EuroQoL) questionnaire. The rheumatologists working with the indigenous community were responsible for examining and treating study participants suffering from MSK disorders. RESULTS: The study sample comprised 2687 individuals, with mean age of 44 (SD, 19.9) years, 1690 (62.9%) of whom were women; Kichwa speakers comprised 32.4% (872), and 1244 (46.3%) reported MSK pain. The most prevalent conditions were as follows: low back pain (9.3%), hand osteoarthritis (OA, 7.2%), knee OA (6.5%), rheumatic regional pain syndrome (5.8%), fibromyalgia (1.8%), and rheumatoid arthritis (1.3%). Lower education level, unemployment, cooking with firewood, and rheumatic diseases were associated with a lower quality of life. CONCLUSIONS: Musculoskeletal disorders, rheumatic diseases, and rheumatoid arthritis were found to be highly prevalent in the studied population. Rheumatoid arthritis and hand OA had the most significant impact on the quality of life.

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