

Abstract

Objective: To assess the prevalence of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) in a general population.

Design: A population-based, cross-sectional study.

Setting: A general population in a rural area of the Netherlands.

Subjects: All subjects aged 55 years and over living in a rural area of the Netherlands in 1990.

Measurements and Main Results: The prevalence of RA was 1.1% (95% confidence interval 0.7–1.5%) in subjects aged 55 years and over.

Conclusion: The prevalence of RA in a general population is 1.1% in subjects aged 55 years and over.

Keywords: prevalence, rheumatoid arthritis, general population, rural area, Netherlands.

Introduction

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic, systemic inflammatory disease of the joints. The prevalence of RA varies between 0.5% and 1.5% in different countries (1–4). The prevalence of RA is generally higher in women than in men (5). The prevalence of RA is also higher in older subjects (6). The prevalence of RA is higher in subjects living in urban areas than in subjects living in rural areas (7). The prevalence of RA is higher in subjects living in the north of the Netherlands than in subjects living in the south of the Netherlands (8). The prevalence of RA is higher in subjects living in the north of the Netherlands than in subjects living in the south of the Netherlands (8). The prevalence of RA is higher in subjects living in the north of the Netherlands than in subjects living in the south of the Netherlands (8).