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INTRODUCTION

Chronic rheumatic diseases require constant and continuous observation and treatment of patients [1]. Following the COVID-19 pandemic reducing the accessibility to health services, a need for remotely provided services has emerged [2;3]. Since the success of telemedicine is considered to be best assessed through the indicator of patient satisfaction with remote consultations [4], it is essential to identify the key health and demographic factors that are related to positive and negative attitudes towards such consultations of patients [5].

METHODS

The sample of the study consists of 207 patients suffering from various chronic rheumatic diseases, mostly spondyloarthritis (n=83) and diseases of connecting tissue (n=53).

Main Demographic Characteristics of Subjects

Characteristic	Value	n	Percent
Sex	Male	30	14,5
	Female	177	85,5
Age, mean ± SD		39,4 ± 11,76	

An original questionnaire was designed for the study to assess the attitude towards remote consulting by rheumatologists. Descriptive statistics was used in the study and Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were applied.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been found that the attitude of patients with rheumatic diseases towards remote consulting is statistically significantly related with the peculiarities of the disease, e.g., strength of the symptoms, character of the disease, etc. and various demographic characteristics of patients, such as age, education, etc.

AIM

To investigate correlations between health and demographic characteristics of patients suffering from chronic rheumatic diseases, and positive and negative attitudes towards remote consulting by a rheumatologist.

RESULTS

The study has shown that men select remote consulting more often than women ($p \leq 0,05$). Patients experience greatest satisfaction when they describe their symptoms of the illness as weak, while least satisfaction is experienced when symptoms are of average severity ($\chi^2=8,36$, $p=0,016$). Analogous negative attitudes towards remote consulting were obtained: the greatest dissatisfaction is among patients experiencing average severity and least dissatisfaction is identified among patients experiencing weak symptoms ($\chi^2=11,31$, $p=0,003$).

Comparison of items reflecting negative attitude towards remote consultations and mean rank of patients' experienced symptoms.

Negative attitude towards remote consultations	Symptom group	Mean rank MR	P value
The physician will not understand my complaints.	Mild	84,66	0,019
	Moderate	112,67	
	Severe	98,39	
I will be unable to describe my symptoms well enough.	Mild	82,95	0,025
	Moderate	110,78	
	Severe	104,79	
The physician will be unable to devote enough time for the conversation.	Mild	87,01	0,038
	Moderate	112,05	
	Severe	97,72	
I believe that my computer skills are too poor.	Mild	86,99	0,019
	Moderate	112,03	
	Severe	97,78	

Patients suffering from diseases of connecting tissue experience greatest negative attitude and fears about remote consulting while patients with spondyloarthritis experience the smallest negative attitude ($\chi^2=9,69$, $p=0,021$). Demographic indicators show that subjects with higher non-university education experience the greatest distrust and fears about remote consulting, while subjects with a university degree experience the lowest degree of fears ($\chi^2=13,60$, $p=0,003$). The greatest fears of doctors not understanding the patient's complaints were observed in the age group of 37-40, while in the age group of 18-25 the said fears were the smallest ($\chi^2=15,7$, $p=0,016$).