Reviewer's report

Title: Profile and course of early Rheumatoid Arthritis in Morocco. A two-year follow-up study.

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Reviewer: Raimon Sanmarti

Reviewer's report:

Major:

the major concern of this study analysing the clinical and radiological evolution of an RA cohort in Morocco is the small sample size. The number of patients (n=51) is very low to obtain valid data about prognostic factors of structural damage in this population, that is one of the major aims of the study.

Another major concern is if this RA cohort is representative of the RA population in this country. The author should clarify this point.

Minor:

- Demographic data of this population raised several questions or comments:
  1. mean age is 46 and, as the authors comments in the discussion, this is significantly lower than those observed in other countries. This is the same in other arabian populations?
  2. the disease duration is "only" 24 weeks. This seems to me low according to the socioeconomic status of this population.
  3. the difference between tender and swollen joint counts is higher than expected. Why?.
  4. HAQ is very high at baseline, suggesting a very disabling disease, but decrease dramatically after two years. How do the authors explain this dramatic improvement?.

- The rates of remission is similar to those observed in other studies of early RA after DMARDs. However there is no data of disease activity through the follow-up, making the interpretation of these data very difficult.

- Patient were treated mainly with MTX. Can you provide the mean doses of this drug?

- The classification of radiographic progressors and progresors seems to me adequate, but the interpretation of the data on prognostic factors, as the authors comment in the discussion is very difficult, almost impossible taking into account the sample size.

- The discussion is long and merits to be shortened. Also the discussion should
be addressed about the differences of the clinical evolution of this population in comparison with other RA populations of similar ethnic origin.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'