

ABSTRACT

A pilot study to test the effect of the autoimmune protocol diet in people with rheumatoid arthritis

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Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a systemic auto-immune disease characterised by severe inflammation of the synovial lining of joints and affects mobility and quality of life. In New Zealand, RA affects an estimated 101,000 adults (1). A popular diet on social media is the Auto-Immune Protocol (AIP), an elimination diet that removes food groups proposed to have a negative impact on autoimmune diseases. Small studies have shown its efficacy in several chronic conditions including multiple sclerosis (2) and inflammatory bowel disease (3). Anecdotally many with RA report alleviation of symptoms using the AIP diet. To date, it has not been clinically tested on RA patients. I am presently conducting a 12-week pilot study, which incorporates quantitative and qualitative research methods to investigate the efficacy and feasibility of the AIP diet for alleviating symptoms of RA. It comprises 2 phases: an initial 4-week control phase in which participants eat as usual, followed by an 8-week intervention in which subjects follow the AIP diet. Primary quantitative measures include changes in Patient Reported Outcome (PRO) questionnaires on quality of life, fatigue, pain, sleep, and emotional wellbeing. Three-day diet diaries will be analysed for nutrient intakes. Semi-structured interviews provide feedback on the experiences of the participants of the diet. Eleven participants with RA were recruited. Two withdrew at 4 weeks. Four have completed all 12 weeks of the study, with all completing by 14th November. This presentation shows preliminary findings. Results to date show, of four participants, three have improved PRO scores for pain, sleep, and fatigue, compared to the control period. The other started with a low score and remained unchanged. These results will give both RA patients and health professionals information on the efficacy of AIP as an adjunct treatment for RA.

References

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