

Orthopedic shoes and foot orthoses in rheumatoid arthritis patients - where are we?

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Introduction: Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) can cause severe impairment in foot structure and consequently difficulties in patients' walking ability. Foot orthoses are an important adjunct conservative therapy for RA.

Purpose: To assess the RA patients' treatment at the outpatient foot orthotics clinic at our Institute, especially whether their number has decreased due to new treatment methods.

Methods: Available medical documentation of RA patients, treated at our outpatient foot orthotics clinic from 2009 to June 2017 was examined. The recorded patients' symptoms and signs were counted, and the number of different categories of prescribed foot orthoses was tabulated. Control charts were used for analysing the number of patients' visits in 6-months and 12-months intervals.

Results: Three hundred nineteen RA patients were examined in the observed period; 146 patients were examined for the first time, 173 were readmitted. Ninety per cent were women, 10% were men; the average patient age was 67 years. The number of patients at 6-months as well as 12-months level varied, but no systematic changes were observed over time (Figure 1). All the data points were within control limits on c and I-MR control charts. Clinical data are available in the patients' medical records, although in some cases they are incomplete. Orthopaedic shoes were prescribed to almost all patients, 2/3 received shoes with individually shaped foot orthoses.

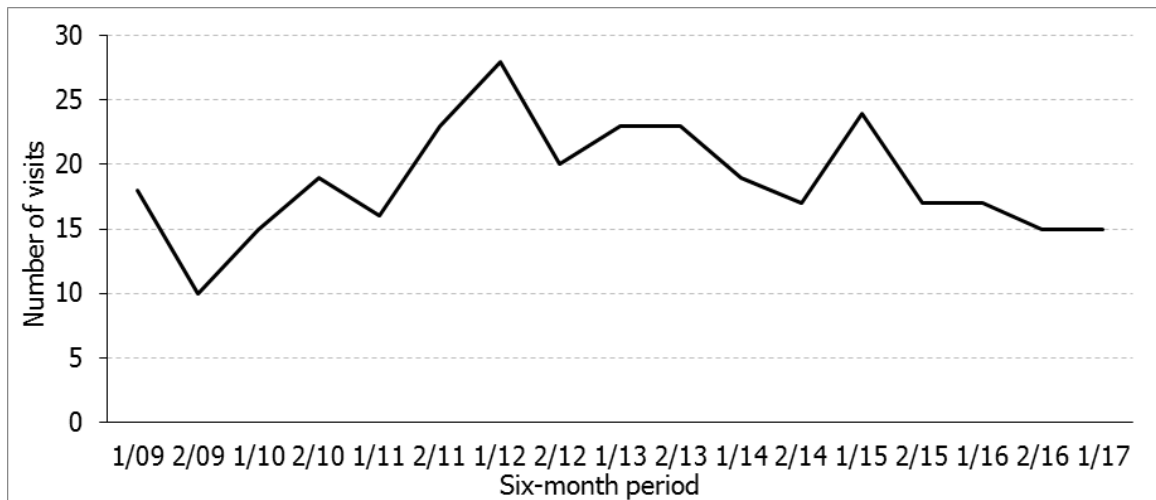


Figure 1. The number of visits by six-month period.

Conclusion: Despite new treatment methods, the outpatient clinic for foot orthotics at our Institute maintains its significance for comprehensive treatment of rheumatoid arthritis patients.