

News Release

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EMBARGOED: Hold for release until Saturday, Oct. 26, at 4:30 p.m. E.T.
American College of Rheumatology

MULTIMEDIA ALERT: Video of Dr. Oh is available for download from the

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Young Fibromyalgia Patients Report Worse Symptoms Than Older Patients, Mayo Clinic Study Shows *Research is among several Mayo studies being presented at American College of Rheumatology meeting*

SAN DIEGO — It may seem counterintuitive, but young and middle-aged fibromyalgia patients report worse symptoms and poorer quality of life than older patients, a Mayo Clinic study shows. Fibromyalgia most often strikes women. It is characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain with fatigue, sleep, memory and mood issues. The research, one of several Mayo studies being presented at the American College of Rheumatology annual meeting, suggests the disorder plays out differently among different age groups.

Researchers studied 978 fibromyalgia patients and divided them into three age groups: those 39 or younger, those 40 to 59, and those 60 or older. The younger and middle-aged patients were likelier to be employed, unmarried, smokers and have a higher education level, lower body mass index, more abuse history and a shorter duration of fibromyalgia symptoms than older patients.

“Among the three age groups of young, middle-aged and older, symptom severity and quality of life differs,” says senior author Terry Oh, M.D., a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. The study’s findings were surprising, because quality of life and physical health are considered to be negatively associated with age in the general population, Dr. Oh says.

Dr. Oh notes that women in all three groups with fibromyalgia reported a lower quality of life than average U.S. women of similar age, and that the difference between their physical health and that of the average woman was more significant than mental health differences, particularly in young patients.

In other studies, Mayo researchers found:

- About 7 percent of fibromyalgia patients had inflammatory rheumatic conditions, and that in general, those fibromyalgia patients didn’t do as well with treatment as those without rheumatic diseases.
- Fibromyalgia patients may also have skin-related symptoms such as excessive sweating or burning or other sensations.

- Obese patients with polymyalgia rheumatica have more pain and disability than other polymyalgia rheumatica patients. They also tend to need higher doses of glucocorticoids.
- Rheumatoid arthritis patient experiences and symptoms do not always reflect what medical literature shows when it comes to pain, morning stiffness, the relationship between swelling and damage, and what worsens or improves symptoms. The study was led by researchers from the Rheumatoid Patient Foundation.
- Hospitalization is a significant risk factor for gout flares in people already diagnosed with gout.

To interview Dr. Oh or other Mayo Clinic researchers about these studies or for expert comment on other research being presented at the ACR meeting, please contact Sharon Theimer in Mayo Clinic Public Affairs at 507-284-5005 or newsbureau@mayo.edu.

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