

Biologic Treatment in Rheumatoid Arthritis – The Swedish Experience

The last ten years a number of biologic drugs (tumour necrosis factor (TNF) blocking agents, anti-B cell and anti-T cell therapy, interleukin 1 and interleukin 6 receptor antagonists) have been registered for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

These drugs have dramatically changed the possibilities to treat RA, but although effective, much concern have been raised about their safety.

In Sweden, a biologic register (Anti-Rheumatic Therapy in Sweden [ARTIS]) was started in 1998 and now includes almost 15 000 biologic-treated RA patients. Risks for e.g. infections and malignancies have been analysed and compared to risks in the general population and in biologics-naïve RA patients using Swedish health care registers and the Swedish Register for Rheumatic diseases. Risks for infections are increased as is the risk for lymphoma compared to the general population, but not compared to other RA patients.