Patients' Disease Burden, Satisfaction, and Use of Technology in Rheumatoid Arthritis in Greece. A Cross Sectional Patient Survey.

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Background

- Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a debilitating chronic, progressive auto-immune disorder that primarily affects joints, but also affects multiple other tissues [1].
- Patients with RA experience a significantly greater incidence of disability than patients in the general population, with an estimated 6.1 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) associated with the disease each year, globally [2].
- With respect to health-related quality of life (HRQoL), RA patients report worse status than patients with other chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes mellitus and myocardial infarction[3].
- Patients with a chronic disease such as RA are at an increased risk for adverse work outcomes including presenteeism, absenteeism, and eventual disability or unemployment [4].

Objective

The objective of current study was to capture patients' disease burden, satisfaction, and use of technology in adult patients with RA in Greece.

Methods

- A cross-sectional survey was conducted in August – September of 2023, adult patients with RA who were members of Greek patient associations ELEANA and Reumazin filled out a structured on-line self-questionnaire .
- The survey questionnaire included sociodemographic characteristics, history of disease, disease self-assessment&impact in daily activities, treatment satisfaction, physician-patient communication and use of technology/media.
- The recruitment process was performed by patient associations staff, without recording members' personal data. The participation in the cross-sectional survey was voluntary. Participants were able to withdraw their consensus at any time. Collected data were anonymous and confidential.
- All statistical analyses were carried out using the statistical software package IBM SPSS, last version.

Results

- A total of 303 adults with RA responded. 40% of the participants reported that they had been diagnosed with RA for more than 10 years.
- Additionally, 40% of the participants stated that they had changed at least one systemic treatment (e.g., biological agents, JAK inhibitors, etc.), while 21% of the participants reported that they had changed more than three.
- 54% of the participants mentioned that the first medical specialty they visited when they experienced initial symptoms was an orthopedic physician.
- Furthermore, 55% of the participants indicated that their initial source of information about RA was a rheumatologist.
- The 83% of the participants reported that RA has important/very important" effect in their daily life activities, whereas the 40% of them mentioned none or little/moderate satisfaction by their current treatment (Figure 1).
- While 59% of the participants reported that their disease significantly affects nearly all of their daily activities (Figure 2).
- The vast majority reported that "remission" is one of the goals that patient and physician have agreed upon, with the absence of pain (89%) being most often reported for definition of remission. Pain was found to be the main determinant of patients' functioning.
- 56% of the participants reported that they made a joint decision with their physician regarding the treatment they would receive (Figure 3).
- The achievement of remission was positively correlated with patients' satisfaction with the course of disease($p \leq 0{,}05$), whereas patients who made a joint decision with physicians about their treatment considered that they have achieved remission($p = 0{,}02$).
- 9 out of 10 participants reported that a digital-tool would help them to prepare adequately for their physician's appointment and that a mobile-or-smartwatch app recording their health status would be useful (Figure 4).

Conclusions

- **Despite their treatment, 8/10 patients reported that RA has important/very important effect in their daily life activities. Almost half of patients were found to be not much or very much satisfied with their current treatment.**
- **Similar to treatment guidelines, remission is one of the main goals set in clinical practice. Increased use of technology is desired by almost all patients so as to be better informed about their health status and disease as well as to improve their communication with physicians.**

Figure 1: Treatment satisfaction

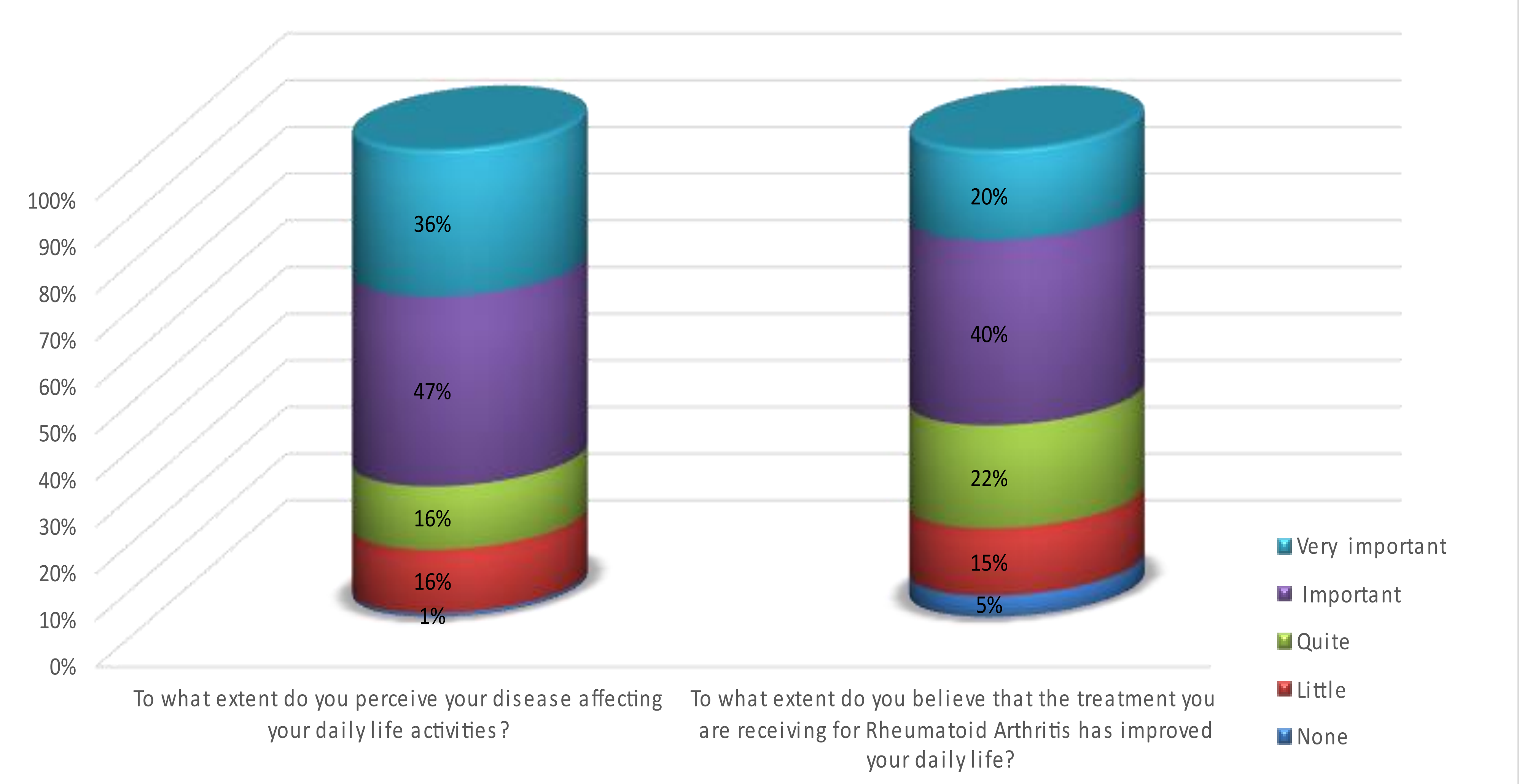


Figure 2: Daily activities affected by Rheumatoid Arthritis

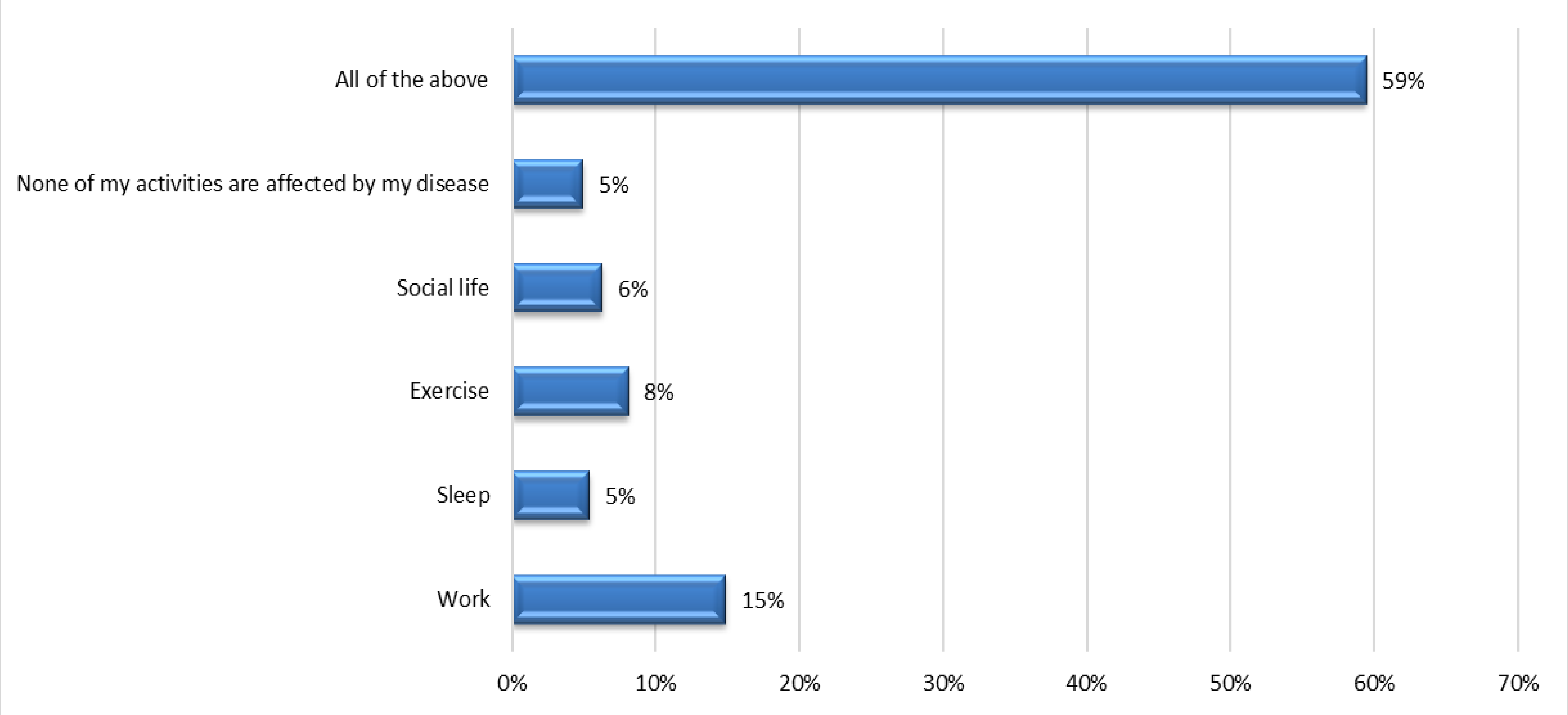


Figure 3: Decision-making between physician and patient regarding treatment

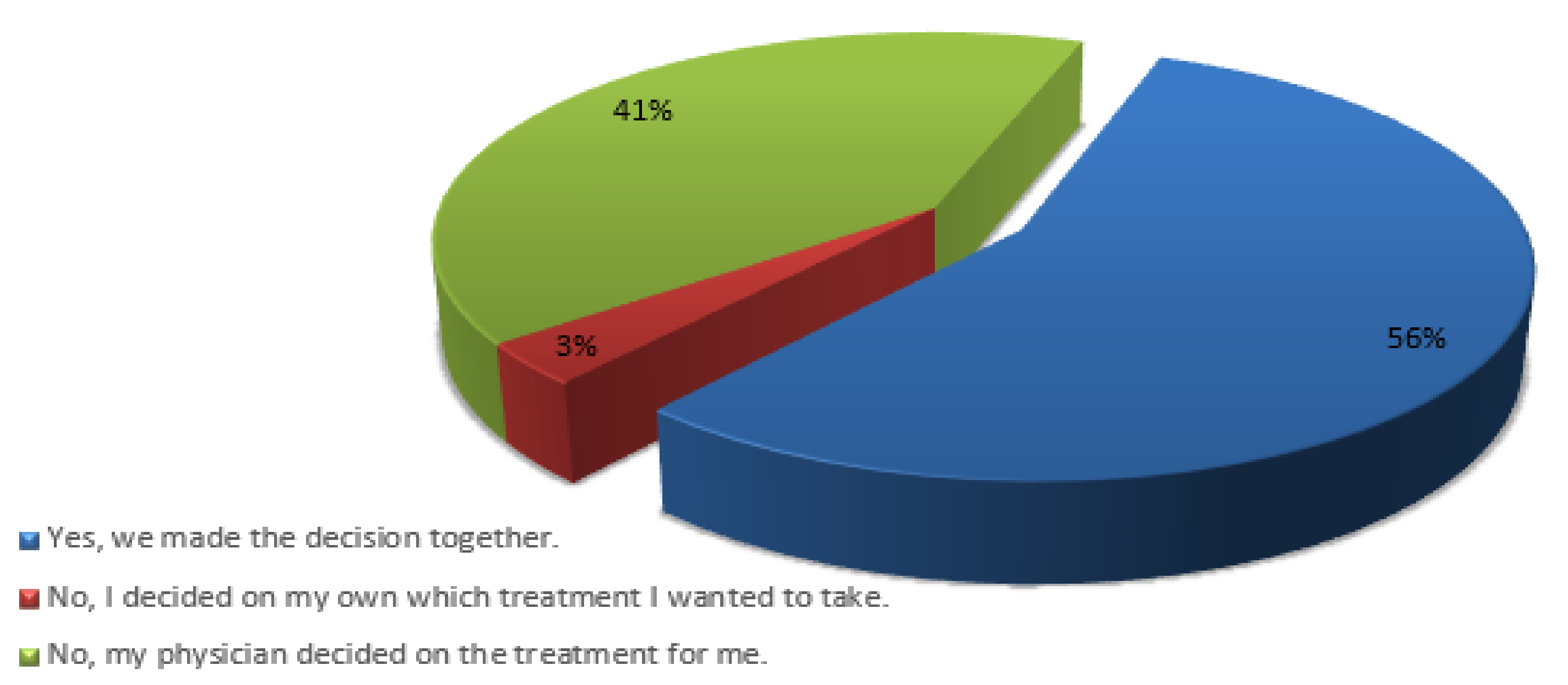
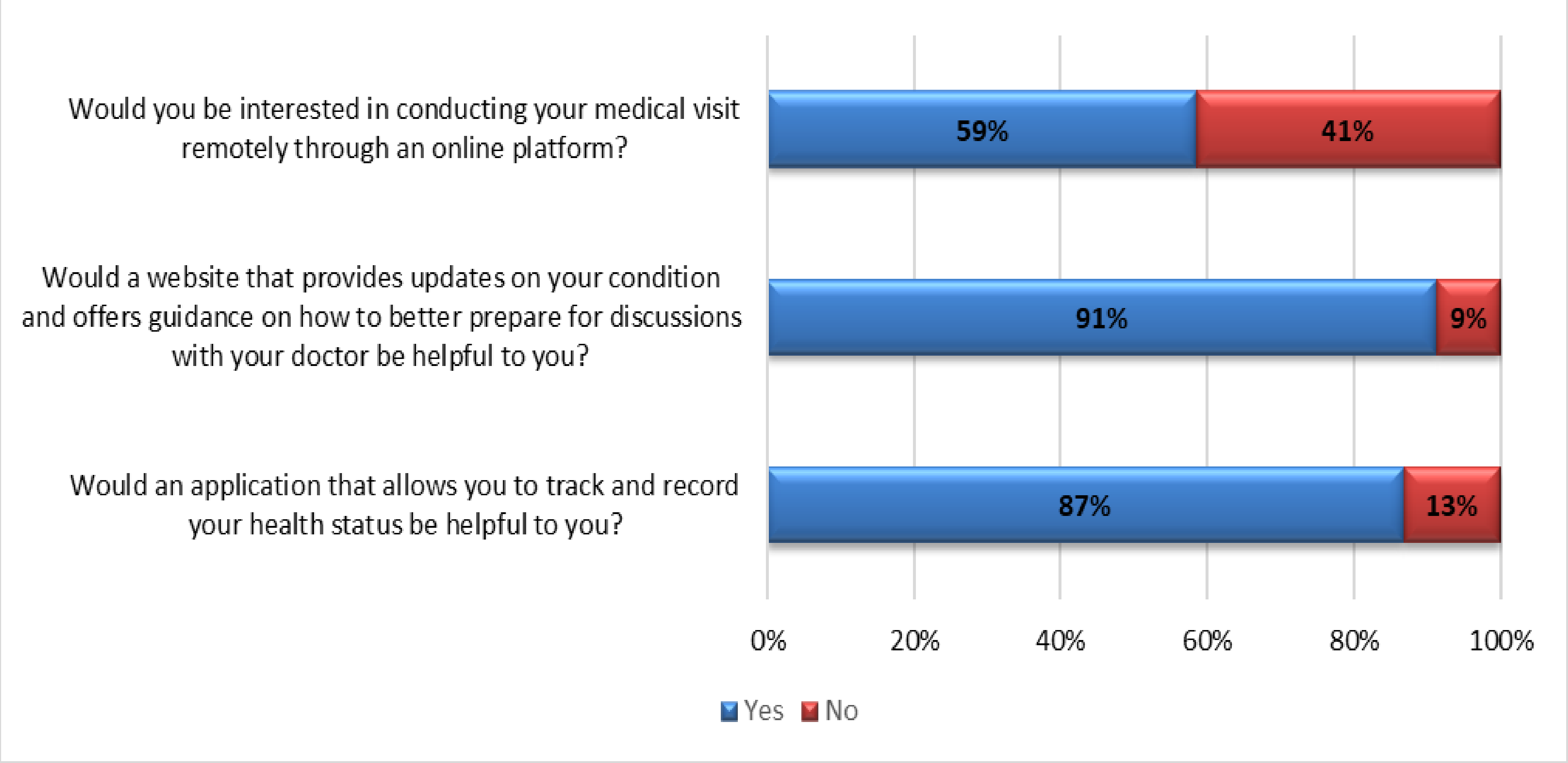


Figure 4: Patient perspectives regarding the use of technology/media.



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