

Factors associated with degree of participation in working life among people with multiple sclerosis: a 10-year follow-up

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Conclusions

- In this cohort of people with multiple sclerosis (MS) participation in working life decreased over time, while disease severity increased. However not all persons with a high disease severity ended participation in working life.
- People participating in working life had a relatively high level of functioning and stayed relatively stable over time in most aspects of functioning, while people who were not working had a lower level of functioning and deteriorated to a higher degree.

Introduction

MS is the most common cause of neurological disability among young and middle-aged adults. It is a progressive disease with potential to affect many different organ-systems, which over time can lead to a high total impact on daily life, including participation in working life.

Among people with MS only 23 % to 59 % are reported to be working and it is quite common that participation in working life ends relatively soon after diagnosis. Reasons for this are not yet thoroughly studied, and neither is change over time in participation in working life.

Aims

- to describe changes in participation in working life over 10 years in a cohort of people with MS
- to identify factors associated with degree of participation in working life in people with MS

Methods

A 10-year follow-up was conducted in 155 persons with MS who had previously participated in a 2-year study with data collections every six months for two years. At each time-point a comprehensive test-battery was used, designed to capture aspects of life known to be commonly affected by MS.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe changes over time and to identify factors associated with participation in working life.

Results

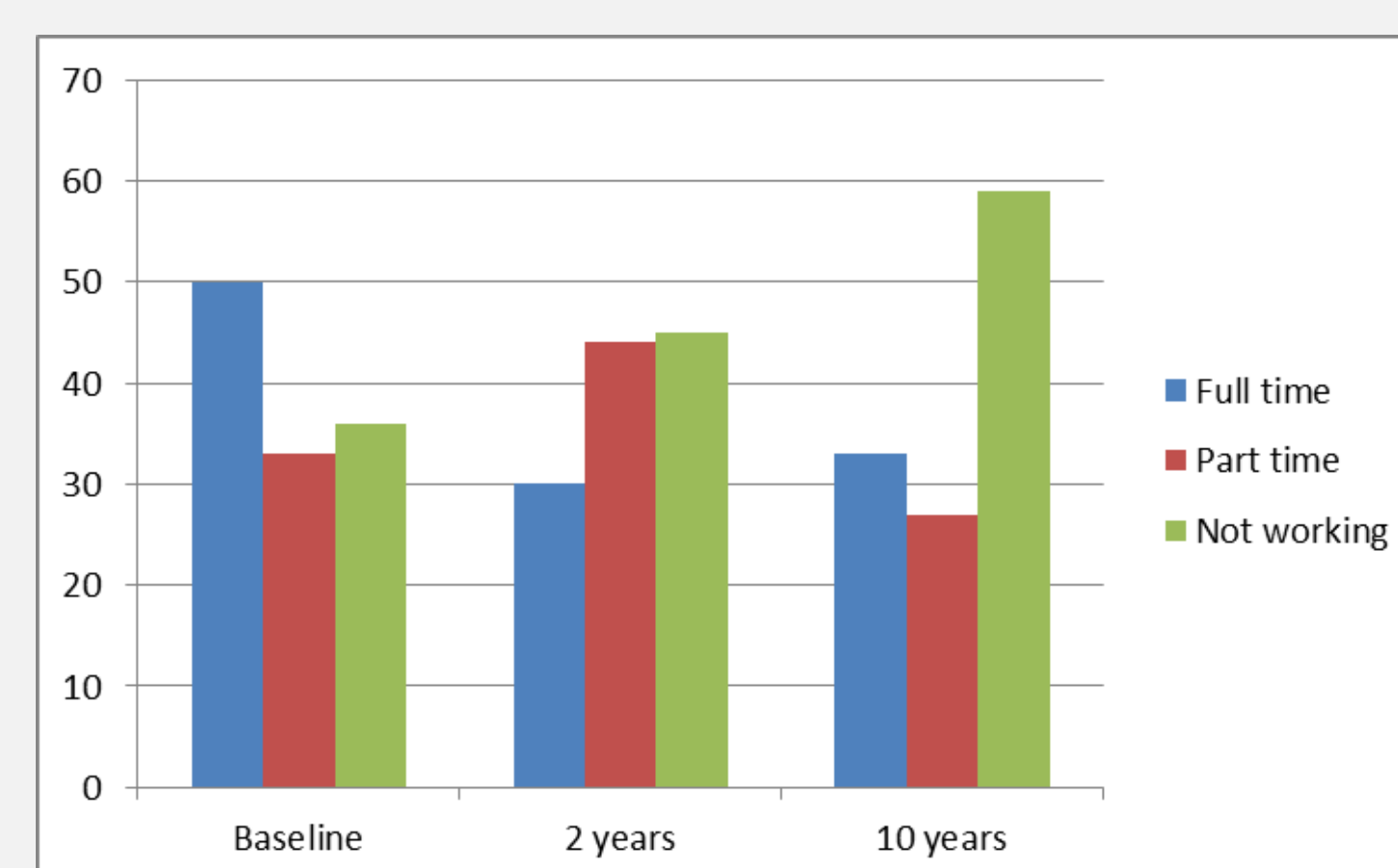


Figure 1. Number of persons participating in working life.

The number of persons with MS participating in working life decreased over the follow-up period (figure 1).

Disease severity increased over time; to a lower degree in people who were working and to a higher degree in those not working, but there were also people with a higher disease severity who continued working (figure 2).

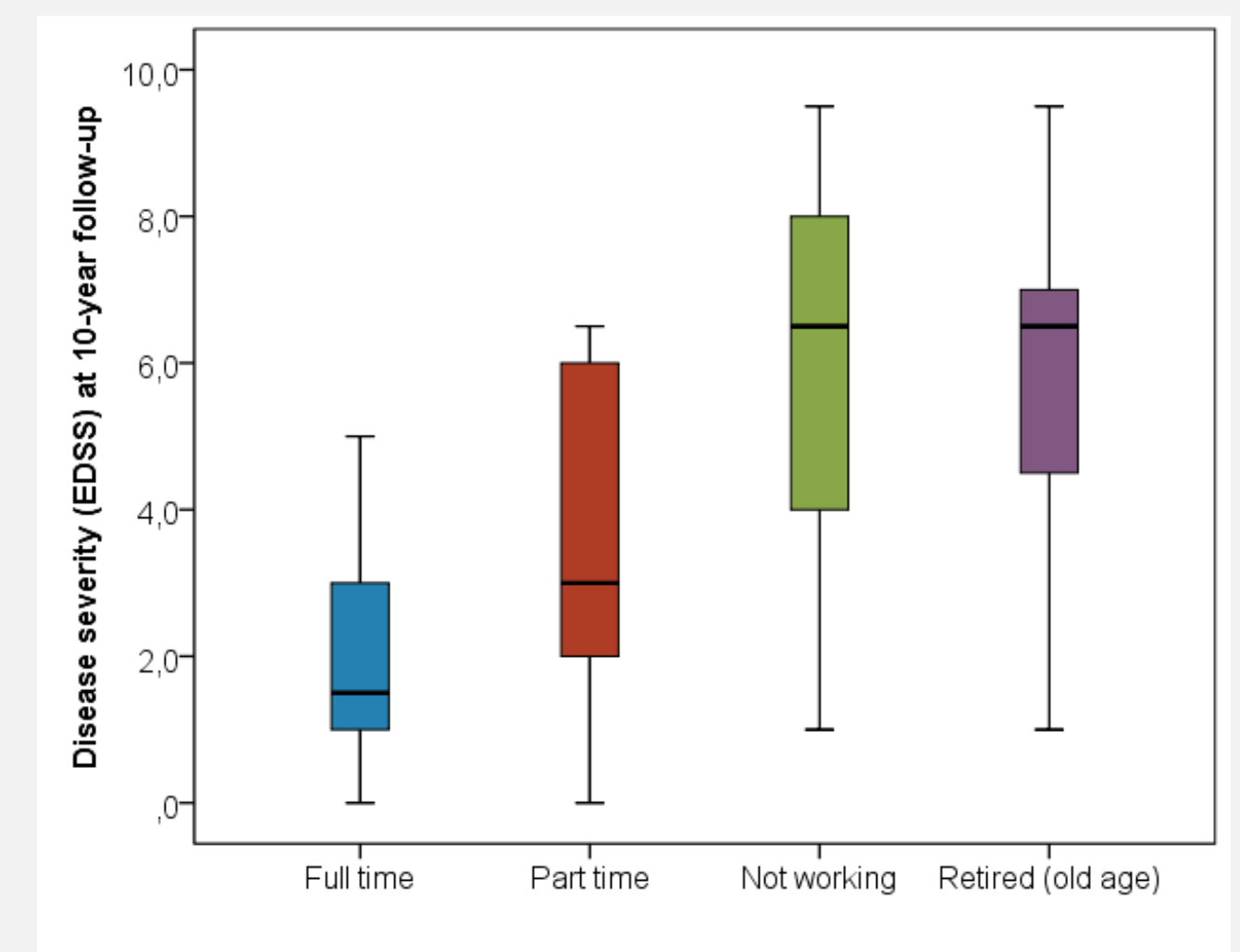


Figure 2. Disease severity and participation in working life.

- Perceived physical impact of MS increased over time, while psychological impact tended to decrease, primarily in those not working.
- Fatigue stayed relatively stable over time, with the least impact in people who were working full time and the most in people not working.
- Home care and life-style activities were performed to a high and stable degree in people who were working, and to a lower and decreasing degree in those not working.

The over all aim of the research is to build new knowledge to develop interventions to improve participation in working life in people with MS. Multivariate analyses of the 10-year follow-up are ongoing as well as interviews with persons with MS concerning work.

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