SUMMARY

Introduction: Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is one of the most common autoimmune diseases worldwide. The estimated global prevalence of this condition ranges from 0.4% to 1.3%, with women being affected up to three times more often than men. Characteristic symptoms of RA include symmetric pain and swelling, muscle weakness, joint deformities, and limitations in range of motion. These symptoms significantly impact on functioning, often restricting or preventing patients from perform daily activities. Considering the difficulties in daily functioning experienced by individuals with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), it is believed that interdisciplinary therapeutic care should be complemented by occupational therapy. According to its principles, occupational therapy aims to improve the patient's ability to perform everyday activities. The objective of this study was to assess the impact of selected occupational therapy methods on improving upper limb function and quality of life in individuals with RA.

Material and methods: The study included a group of 55 women aged 50–70 years with diagnosed rheumatoid arthritis in remission. These participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups. Group A (N=19) underwent an original hand therapy program using the interactive device Pablo Tyromotion System®. Group B (N=19) received hand therapy using selected art therapy techniques, while Group C (N=17) served as the control group without therapeutic intervention. The effects of therapy were assessed using the Box and Blocks Test, 25 Hole Pegboard Test, Pablo Tyromotion System®, the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM), the Numeric Rating Scale (NRS) for pain intensity, and the Short Form 36 Health Survey (SF-36v2).

Results: Statistically significant results were obtained for most of the measured parameters in both groups A and B. The significant level of change pertained to the Box and Blocks Test, 25 Hole Peg Test, Jebsen Taylor Hand Function Test, and the NRS scale. In group A, there was also a significant level of change observed in the Pablo® System, COPM questionnaire and the SF-36v2 questionnaire.

Conclusions: Both proprietary therapeutic programs positively impacted certain parameters related to upper limb function, but program A proved to be more effective. Additionally, program A demonstrated greater efficacy in improving selected daily activity and physical quality of life in the physical area among the studied patients.

Keywords: occupational therapy, hand therapy, rheumatoid arthritis, interactive technologies, art therapy.