**Additional file 2.**

Title: Baseline characteristics in patients with or without unacceptable pain and low inflammation at follow-ups

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| Characteristic | VAS pain>40 and CRP<10 after1 year | VAS pain>40 and CRP<10 after2 years | VAS pain>40 and CRP<10 after5 years |
|  | **Present** | **Absent** | **Present** | **Absent** | **Present** | **Absent** |
| N (%) | 40 (18.3)  | 178 (81.7)  | 41 (19.7) | 167 (80.3) | 40 (22.5) | 138 (77.5) |
| Female, n (%) | 27 (67.5)  | 127 (71.3)  | 35 (85.4) | 111 (66.5) | 32 (80.0) | 94 (68.1) |
| Age, mean (SD), years | 56.1 (14.0)  | 63.6 (13.2)  | 53.7 (17.5) | 61.6 (13.7) | 58.8 (13.4) | 59.3 (14.9) |
| Symptom duration, months  | 8.5 (6.3–10.0)  | 7.0 (5.0–10.0)  | 7.0 (5.0–9.0) | 7.0 (5.0–10.0) | 8.0 (6.0–10.0) | 7.0 (5.0–10.0) |
| RF positive, n (%) | 22 (55.0)  | 112 (62.9)  | 23 (56.1) | 102 (61.1) | 21 (52.5) | 93 (67.4) |
| Anti-CCP positive, n/N (%)  | 21/47 (56.8)  | 88/151 (58.3)  | 16/34 (47.1) | 86/146 (58.9) | 16/36 (44.4) | 75/118 (63.6) |
| Prednisolone, n (%) | 16 (40.0)  | 68 (38.2)  | 18 (43.9) | 60 (35.9) | 15 (37.5) | 49 (35.5) |
| Methotrexate, n (%) | 19 (47.5)  | 96 (53.9)  | 20 (48.8) | 91 (54.5) | 21 (52.2) | 75 (54.3) |
| No DMARD, n (%) | 6 (15.0)  | 32 (18.0)  | 12 (29.3) | 23 (13.8) | 5 (12.5) | 22 (15.9) |
| Erosion, n (%) | 4 (10.0) | 30 (16.9)  | 2 (4.9) | 29 (17.4) | 5 (12.5) | 26 (18.8) |
| Body Mass Index, mean (SD) | 25.1 (4.7)a | 25.5 (4.2)b | 25.4 (4.4)c | 25.6 (4.2)d | 25.3 (3.9)e | 25.4 (4.0)f |
| Current smoking, n/N (%) | 10/28 (35.7) | 43/126 (34.1) | 5/27 (18.5) | 42/120 (35.0) | 8/29 (27.6) | 31/94 (33.0) |
| Grip force, % of expected, mean (SD) | 36.4 (23.3)g | 39.4 (25.8)h | 35.3 (22.0)i | 40.0 (26.2)j | 37.1 (23.1)k | 40.2 (26.7)l |
| VAS pain, mean (SD) | 49.0 (24.3)  | 39.7 (27.0)  | 45.6 (23.2) | 39.3 (27.4) | 46.8 (23.4) | 38.9 (27.5) |
| DAS28, mean (SD) | 4.6 (1.3)  | 4.7 (1.5)  | 4.6 (1.4) | 4.6 (1.4) | 4.6 (1.2) | 4.6 (1.4) |
| SJC28 | 6.0 (4.0–9.8)  | 7.0 (5.0–11.0)  | 7.0 (4.0–11.0) | 7.0 (5.0­–11.0) | 6.0 (4.0–8.0) | 7.0 (4.8–12.0) |
| TJC28 | 7.0 (3.0–11.0)  | 4.0 (1.0–9.0)  | 6.0 (3.5–10.5) | 4.0 (1.0–10.0) | 5.0 (2.0–8.8) | 4.0 (1.0–9.0) |
| HAQ | 0.8 (0.6–1.3)  | 0.9 (0.3–1.3)  | 0.9 (0.4–1.4) | 0.8 (0.4–1.3) | 0.75 (0.41–1.10) | 0.75 (0.25–1.25) |
| CRP (mg/l) | <9 (<9–9.0)  | 10.0 (<9–34.3)  | < 9 (< 9–10.5) | 10.0 (< 9–30.0) | < 9 (< 9–14.0) | 9.5 (< 9–33.3) |
| CRP>9 mg/l, n (%) | 12 (30.0)  | 100 (56.2)  | 15 (36.6) | 90 (53.9) | 20 (50.0) | 74 (53.6) |
| ESR (mm/h) | 16.0 (9.0–22.0)  | 23.0 (11.0–44.0)  | 14.0 (9.5–27.0) | 22.0 (11.0–45.0) | 18.0 (7.8–30.0) | 23.0 (11.0–46.3) |
| VAS PGA, mean (SD) | 46.4 (25.8)  | 43.2 (27.2)  | 50.0 (24.0-64.0) | 42.0 (27.5) | 49.8 (22.1) | 41.0 (27.8) |

Legend: Values are median (interquartile range) unless otherwise indicated. aData for body mass index in 28 cases. bData in 125 cases. cData in 27 cases. dData in 119 cases. eData in 29 cases. fData in 93 cases. gData for grip force in 37 cases. hData in 153 cases. iData in 37 cases. jData in 149 cases. kData in 39 cases. lData in 124 cases.
VAS: visual analogue scale; CRP: C-reactive protein; SD: standard deviation; RF: rheumatoid factor; Anti-CCP: anti-cyclic citrullinated peptide; DMARD: disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drug; DAS28: disease activity score in 28 joints; SJC28: swollen joint count in 28 joints; TJC28: tender joint count in 28 joints; HAQ: health assessment questionnaire; ESR: erythrocyte sedimentation rate; PGA: patient global assessment.