

Advancing Concepts of Rheumatoid Arthritis

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Description

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a chronic inflammatory disorder which affects more than just your joints. In some people, the condition may damage a wide range of body systems, including the skin, eyes, lungs, heart and blood vessels. Rheumatoid arthritis occurs when your immune system mistakenly attacks the tissues which are present in your own body.

Unlike the wear-and-tear damage of osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis affects the lining of your joints, causing a painful swelling which may eventually result in bone erosion and joint deformity. The inflammation which is associated with rheumatoid arthritis can damage other parts of the body as well. While new types of medications have improved treatment options drastically, severe rheumatoid arthritis can still cause physical disabilities.

RA is an autoimmune disease. Your immune system is supposed to attack the foreign particles in your body, like bacteria and viruses, by creating a sign of inflammation. In an autoimmune disorder, the system mistakenly sends inflammation to your own healthy tissue. The system creates tons of inflammation that's sent to your joints causing joint pain and swelling. If the inflammation remains present for an extended period of your time, it can cause damage to the joint. This damage typically can't be reversed once it occurs. The cause of RA is not known. There is evidence that autoimmune conditions run in families. For instance, certain genes that you simply are born with may cause you to more likely to urge RA.

Diagnosis

Rheumatoid arthritis can be difficult to diagnose in its early stages because the early signs and symptoms can mimic those of many other diseases. There is no single blood test or physical finding to confirm the diagnosis of the disease. During the physical exam, your doctor will check your joints for swelling, redness and warmth and may also check your reflexes and muscle strength as well.

There is no cure for rheumatoid arthritis. But clinical studies indicate that remission of symptoms is more likely when treatment

begins early with medications referred to as disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs). Assistive devices can make it easier to avoid stressing your painful joints. For instance, a kitchen knife equipped with a hand grip helps protect your finger and wrist joints. Certain tools, like buttonhooks, can make it easier to urge dressed. Catalogs and medical supply stores are good places to seem for ideas.

Treatment

RA patients should begin their treatment with disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs-referred to as DMARDs. These drugs not only relieve symptoms but also slow progression of the joint damage. Often, doctors prescribe DMARDs along with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or NSAIDs and/or low-dose corticosteroids, to lower swelling and pain. DMARDs have greatly improved the pain, swelling, and quality of life for nearly all patients with RA. Ask your rheumatologist about the need for DMARD therapy along with the risks and benefits of these drugs.

The best treatment of RA needs much more than medicines alone. Patient education, like the way to deal with RA, is also important. Proper care often requires a team of providers, including rheumatologists, medical care physicians, and physical and occupational therapists. You will need frequent visits through the year together with your rheumatologist. These checkups let your doctor track the course of your disease and check for any side effects of your medications. Also, you likely will got to repeat blood tests and X-rays or ultrasounds from time to time.

Rheumatoid arthritis increases your risk of developing: Osteoporosis, Rheumatoid nodules, Dry eyes and mouth, Infections, Abnormal body composition, Carpal tunnel syndrome, Heart problems, Lung disease and Lymphoma.

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