

Progression of Training and Skills Rheumatology

Preamble

Previously, treatment of rheumatologist disease consisted of anti-inflammatory agents, joint protection, and the eventual attempted reconstruction of destroyed joints. However, this is a rapidly changing area, with advancements in understanding related to the immunology of these disorders. Consequently, the promise of disease modulating treatment has become a reality and early and accurate diagnosis has assumed a hitherto unforeseen importance. At present evidence-based medical treatment of rheumatological disorders has helped patients with rheumatism lead a near normal life. Accordingly, the family medicine physician needs to recognize the importance of early diagnosis, treatment and holistic care of the patient with rheumatism and competency in assessing patient understanding of the disease and how to participate in the treatment plan through self-management skills.

Goals

- Ability to obtain an accurate history and perform a competent physical examination when confronted with a potential rheumatologic presentation
- Knowledgeable of relevant laboratory testing, its timing and imaging
- Understanding of the role of consultation and recognition of circumstances in which urgent referral is needed
- Development of communication skills to improve understanding and compliance
- Recognition that treatment of rheumatologic diseases may often, if not always at some stage, require a multidisciplinary approach to optimize care and decrease disability
- Ability to perform those procedures needed to assist diagnosis, and to recognize circumstances when such are needed

Objectives

- Performance of basic elements of a rheumatologic assessment
- Development of a differential diagnosis based on pattern of joint and soft tissue involvement (symmetrical small joints, non-symmetrical large joints, axial skeleton)
- Ordering and interpretation of appropriate laboratory tests based on initial evaluation
- Ordering of appropriate radiographic views of involved joints and interpretation with emphasis on soft tissue changes and early erosive changes
- Evaluation of limitations in activities of daily living and effect on social and psychological status of the patient
- Recognition of urgent presentations and performance of appropriate synovial fluid aspiration and analysis
- Use of pain control modalities including pharmacologic agents, physical therapy, and intra-articular and soft tissue aspirations and injections
- Appropriate utilization of physical therapy, splinting, assistive or offloading devices
- Communication to the patient and family regarding the proposed investigation, treatment and community resources available
- Inclusion of a multidisciplinary approach and appropriate referral to orthopedics

The goals and objectives are achieved through a combination of structured experience together with didactic instruction.

[Revised and approved at the Faculty Retreat June 20, 2014]