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RHEUMORS

A Newsletter for Patients LATE FALL 2012

POINTS ON JOINTS:

Rheumatoid Arthritis: Outside the Joints

WRITTEN BY ANGUS B. WORTHING, MD, FACR

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) primarily causes pain and swelling in the hands, wrists, feet and many other joints on both sides of the body. The symmetric nature of diffuse joint pain is often a clue leading to diagnosis, because it suggests that inflammation is present in the entire system, or "systemic", in someone with RA. Systemic inflammation is important because it can cause problems in organs other than the joints. Recognizing and treating these problems can be as important as addressing the painful joints.

The most common symptom of rheumatoid arthritis outside of joint pain is fatigue. People with RA feel fatigue from multiple causes: the immune system saps a person's energy as it produces inflammation; the soreness can be mentally and physically draining; and stiffness or pain can cause insomnia. Anemia, or low blood counts, can be another feature of RA which can cause fatigue. Luckily, fatigue (and anemia) often improve when treatment for rheumatoid arthritis is initiated. One of the most gratifying moments for a rheumatologist occurs when a patient reports that she finally has the energy to return to work or family life.

Inflammation in RA is also known to affect the cardiovascular system. Unfortunately, this increases the risk of heart attack and stroke in people with RA. Often a rheumatologist will suggest cholesterol and other screening tests to try to lower risks. Smoking cessation if necessary is essential. Fortunately, new research indicates that the increase in cardiovascular risk also improves as the joint inflammation comes under control.

People with RA get some types of infections more frequently than others. In its simplest form, one can imagine that as the immune system causes inflammation in the joints, it is distracted from its main job of defending the body. This, too, improves as the inflammation is treated; however, many RA medications also reduce immunity. Thus, people with RA should protect themselves with common sense interventions(eg, regular handwashing and avoidance of crowded areas), regular flu shots and other vaccines, and by calling their doctor at the first signs of infection to ensure adequate treatment.

Many other organ systems can be affected including the eyes, which can be dried out by decreased tear production or reddened by inflammation; and mouth, which can be dry and more prone to gum disease. Nerves can be pinched by the joint swelling to cause tingling in hands or feet. The skin can develop rheumatoid nodules near joints. Lungs may fill with water or develop swollen, painful linings. These problems can be identified and treated by rheumatologists and other subspecialists.

It is important to remember that Rheumatoid Arthritis is not just a bunch of painful joints, but rather a systemic illness that requires careful and thorough evaluation of multiple organ systems on a regular basis.

HEAL YOUR BACK SERIES:

Relaxing Muscles

WRITTEN BY DAVID G. BORENSTEIN, MD, MACP, FACR

Muscle tightness may accompany any disorder that causes pain in the lumbar spine. Muscle spasms occur in order to reduce motion and decrease irritation to the injured structures, and the best way to relieve spasms is to keep moving! Incremental—gradual----motions relieve spasm and allow the muscle to continuously test how far it can stretch. As the irritation is relieved, the muscles will go back to their normal tension. Remember this point, however: the first place to be injured will be the last to improve.

In addition to gradual motion, medications (aspirin-like medicines), cold packs (to relieve pain initially), a heating pad (to improve blood flow later), and stretching exercises are all appropriate self-care treatments to relive the discomfort of back strain. Not all of these therapies are necessarily required, however, and you many respond to any one component.

Muscle relaxants can offer relief for muscle spasms that are severe. I have found these drugs to be particularly effective for individuals who have muscle spasms that do not respond to pain relievers and stretching exercises. The big concern about muscle relaxants is the side effect of sleepiness. Muscle relaxants can be effective without causing sleepiness. In fact only a small number of people have sleepiness when taking muscle relaxants. However, you should not drive a car or engage in an activity that requires your full attention when you first start taking these medicines. You need to be sure that you are not one of the minority of people who get sleepy from these drugs. You should ask your doctor about the addition of a muscle relaxant if you have experienced tight muscles in the low back. Muscle relaxants may be effective even if you have had muscle spasms for weeks or months without improvement.

Physical Therapy Management of Jaw Pain

WRITTEN BY POWELL J. BERNHARDT
PT, DPT, MS, CMTPT

Do you suffer from frequent jaw pain or headaches? Do you grind your teeth while sleeping at night? Does your jaw click or lock when you yawn or chew food? Do you clench your teeth when you are stressed? If you answered yes to any of the preceding questions, you may have Temporomandibular Joint Disorder (TMD).

The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) is formed between the temporal bone of your skull and your lower jaw, or mandible. The joint contains a cartilaginous disc that separates the joint into two distinct cavities. During the early phase of mouth opening, the lower cavity of the TMJ rolls on the disc. In the later stage of mouth opening, the upper cavity glides forward with the disc. Normal jaw motion requires proper synchrony between the bones, muscles, disc and ligaments of the head, neck, and face. When this movement is repetitive or asymmetrical, dysfunction usually occurs at the TMJ.

The International Association for the Study of Pain defines TMD as "aching in the muscles of mastication, sometimes with occasional brief severe pain on chewing, often associated with restricted jaw movement and clicking or popping sounds." TMD is a collection of disorders that affect the TMJ and associated orofacial musculature and nerves. TMD is usually the result of jaw clenching, grinding, or direct trauma. It can also be affected by other factors that include stress, anxiety, depression, and other psychosocial disorders. Symptoms of TMD include joint sounds, restricted range of motion and jaw function, muscle and joint tenderness, and pain in front of the ear. While the cause is not known, TMD is more prevalent in women.

Although you probably have consulted with your dentist, you may not be aware of the benefits that skilled physical therapy can provide to a person suffering from TMD. As a musculoskeletal expert, your physical therapist will evaluate your head, neck, and jaw to determine if the cause of your pain is due to muscle spasm, abnormal joint movement, poor posture, or another source. Physical therapy treatment options include myofascial release or trigger point dry needling to decrease muscle spasm, joint mobilization to facilitate proper joint movement, stabilization exercises to increase strength of the neck musculature, postural and ergonomic corrective techniques to improve postural dysfunction, and modalities to decrease inflammation and pain.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, feel free to set up a consultation with one of our physical therapists at any of our four office locations.

Juggling the Holidays

WRITTEN BY BRENDA BROUILLETTE RN, BS

If you are a lover of the holidays, you probably make your lists, plan the events and menus, shop till your drop, and then bask in the splendor of all the holiday festivities. Of course this can take a toll on both your physical and mental health. Often people feel compelled to do more than what they can actually handle and juggling is difficult. The trick is to balance your activities workload and reduce the stress to be able to appreciate the holidays.

Try some of these tips to make your holiday season a healthier and happier time to enjoy.

- Truly evaluate what is most important about the holidays to you. Then plan your activities and tasks around that focused goal. Use a calendar to keep track of all planned activities. Downsize the amount of work associated with each activity, and break big under-takings such as shopping and wrapping into multiple sessions. Decide in advance on a budget that is reasonable for you.
- Take the time to get enough rest during the holidays to replenish your body's needs with 7-8 hours of sleep. Warms baths relax the achy joints and muscles, while a glass of warm milk can help slumber.
- Space out those tasks of wrapping the presents and baking those cookies over a course of time instead of all at one time. Remember to take breaks and actually enjoy the activity. Keeping your joints moving is good, but avoid long periods of repetitive motion.
- If you are traveling, incorporate frequent breaks for stretching to avoid back, joint and muscle stiffness.
- Try to focus on healthy eating, even though all the holiday food is tempting. Use some good sense in limiting the intake of sugary and processed pleasures, as well as other foods that are high in omega-6 fatty acids which can promote inflammation.
- Take the time to exercise and revitalize your body.
- Plan for medical issues by having enough medication on hand and knowing the office hours of your physicians during the holidays.

Enjoy your holiday season!

ARA's Wellness Classes for January 2013

YOGA AT SHADY GROVE
Series I: (Mondays) January 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th, and February 4th
Series II: (Thursdays) January 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st, and February 7th

YOGA AT WHEATON
(Mondays) January 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th, and February 4th

PILATES EXERCISE
(Thursdays) January 3rd, 10th, 17th, and 24th

OSTEOPOROSIS AT WHEATON
(Thursdays) January 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st, and February 7th

FIBROMYALGIA IN SHADY GROVE
(Wednesdays) January 16th, 23rd, and 30th.

The Best Back Medicine – A Positive Attitude

WRITTEN BY DAVID G. BORENSTEIN, MD, MACP, FACR

You may not believe it, but just learning about the causes of back pain and the fact that it gets better on its own has a great therapeutic effect. The positive feeling that comes from knowing that your problem will be solved can help heal low back pain. Understanding the cause of your back pain goes a long way in relieving your anxiety concerning the potential threat to your health. The relief of stress plays an important role in the resolution of back pain whether acute or chronic. Such knowledge is as powerful as manipulation by a chiropractor or physical therapist or supervised exercise by a physical therapist.

One of my patients has taught me the power of positive attitude. She is ill with a multitude of medical problems, anyone of which could devastate a negative person. She returns to my office on a regular basis. She is always nicely dressed and has a smile on her face despite chronic pain and disability. I asked her what her secret was. How in the face of these difficulties, the chronic nature of her illness, the multiple medicines she needs to take to function, does she continue with such a positive attitude? She told me her secret was very simple. Long ago when her problems started to mount up, she made a choice. She said, "I can be better or bitter. I decided to concentrate on the "e" and not the "i". She is testimonial to the therapeutic powers of a positive attitude.

Be positive and you can be better even in the face of adversity.

RHEUM MYTH OLOGY:

Does Stress Cause RA?

WRITTEN BY BRENDA BROUILLETTE RN, BS

Stress is a complicating factor in many diseases. A circulated myth is that stress can cause rheumatoid arthritis, which is untrue. However, stress can contribute to flares or exacerbations of underlying RA, and may be involved in the timing of the initial onset in some cases. Severe flares can often be seen following the loss of a loved one or a job, during a move or divorce or other stressful life events. A person cannot avoid stress entirely, but definitely can learn to manage it better.

The University of Washington, Department of Orthopedics Stress Management Program lists three components to be successful. They include: (1) learn how to reduce stress; (2) learn how to accept what you cannot change; (3) learn how to overcome the harmful effects of stress.

Reducing stress first requires a person to assess what types of activities or events are their personal stress triggers. In addition to the many kinds of stressors associated with everyday living, those afflicted with RA may have to deal with additional stressful issues relating to pain, fatigue, depression, self-esteem and self-image, along with altered finances, independence, and social life.

REDUCING STRESS:

- Simplify life and activities
- Manage time and conserve energy
- Seek assistance for coping and support
- Ensure exercise is part of your daily routine
- Incorporate yoga, meditation, and breathing relaxation techniques
- Use assistive devices to avoid joint stress and facilitate difficult activities of daily living. THINK before you do.

While stress may not be the cause of rheumatoid arthritis, stress reduction is clearly beneficial in limiting and managing RA flares. Positve influence on other physical and psychological problems is an extra added bonus!

Dupuytren's Disease and Treatment Options

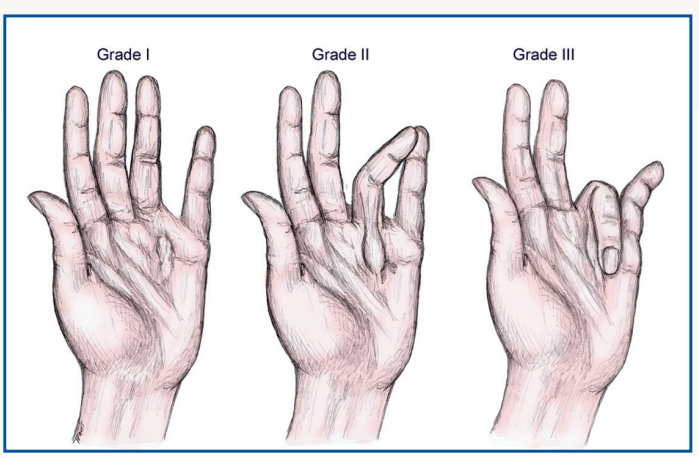
WRITTEN BY PAUL J. DEMARCO, MD, FACP, FACR

Dupuytren's disease affects approximately 1% of the population, an incidence similar to rheumatoid arthritis or ankylosing spondylitis. Strongly familial, it is more frequently seen in patients of Northern European ancestry. Dupuytren's disease, a common ailment of the hand, causes involuntary fixed flexion of one or more fingers, usually the 4th or 5th digits. This flexion, or contracture, results from the abnormal deposition of collagen (a major protein associated with connective tissues) along the palm of the hand.

Dupuytren's contractures can result in an inability to fully use the hand. The loss of function happens slowly over time. Many patients have trouble performing simple activities. It may become much harder to wash with the hand flattened, or even wash the face. Many patients find it difficult holding a bottle in one hand, or shaking someone's hand. The contracture may limit stroking or caressing someone or even picking up small objects with the thumb and index finger.

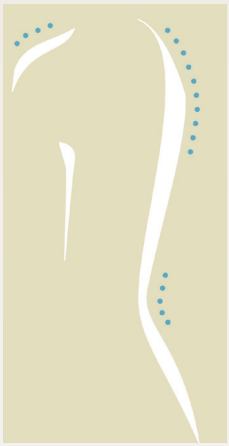
Until recently, the options for treatment were mainly surgical. The open surgical procedures often require more than 6 weeks of post operative occupational therapy, which many people find unattractive.

The new medical treatment for Dupuytren's disease, called collagenase clostridium histolyticum or Xiaflex® , is injected



into the tight and thickened area of the palm on the first day. On the following day, a manipulation is performed to free the contracted digit. Most patients have release after one injection; it can take up to three injections to completely release the contracture.

The physicians at Arthritis and Rheumatism Associates, P.C. perform these injections under ultrasound guidance with excellent results. We are excited to offer this procedure for our patients with contractures, to alleviate the disabling consequences of Dupuytren's disease.



New Wellness Fibromyalgia Class

This past September a new educational class on Fibromyalgia was introduced at our Rockville and Wheaton rehabilitation Centers. These classes were well received and will therefore be continued, and expanded to new locations, in the new year. The class is a three week series and will focus on education and exercise, both of which are critical components of successfully managing this syndrome. Clinicians will present common theories behind the cause of fibromyalgia as well as possible treatment options with ample time for questions and answers. The exercise demonstrations are centered on gentle exercises for the whole body, incorporating stretches and strengthening for the neck, back, core, arms, and legs. Each session will incorporate a guided meditation to allow the mind and body to relax and decrease tension. Rebecca Wagner, LPTA, and Karrie McDonough, DPT, will lead these classes. The class will be offered in Chevy Chase in early 2013. Check our website for all classes and registration information.

1 hour classes will be held 3 consecutive Wednesdays:
January 9th, 2013 • January 16th, 2013 • January 23rd, 2013 at 6:00pm at our Chevy Chase office.

Fibromyalgia – Often Misunderstood

WRITTEN BY DAVID P. WOLFE, MD, FACR

Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) is a common disorder, which is frequently unrecognized, inadequately treated, and misunderstood.

Fibromyalgia is known as a syndrome and not a disease because, until recently, the causes of its symptoms were not known. Over the past few years, however, medical research has begun to shed more light on the biochemical basis of fibromyalgia allowing it to gain a wider level of acceptance in the medical community.

The core sets of symptoms of fibromyalgia are pain, usually generalized but occasionally localized, fatigue, and non-restorative sleep. Many other diverse symptoms can also occur and often mimic other conditions. If one word were used to encapsulate the condition it would be "distress."

Fibromyalgia can be "triggered" in an individual by many different things such as an accident or injury, infection, autoimmune or endocrine disorder, a medication, or an emotional trauma. However once it has been initiated, the exact cause is not important because, so to speak, "the horse is out of the barn."

The pain of fibromyalgia can include sharp, throbbing, burning, prickling, or leaden sensations alone or in combination and can vary at different times. This seems to result from a combination of factors, including a failure of the central nervous system to "filter out" background sensory input and an "amplification" of sensory signals as they travel to the brain. The brain also misinterprets normal signals so that they appear to be discomforting when they are not.

The fatigue in fibromyalgia has a lot to do with poor quality sleep. The definition of poor sleep quality is sleep that is not restful. There are many reasons why sleep quality might be poor including unrecognized sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome, or alpha wave intrusions (waking brain waves which are superimposed on sleeping brain waves).

Individuals with fibromyalgia can have a great diversity of other symptoms including, but not limited to, headaches, congestion of the ears, nose, and throat, dryness of the eyes and mouth, sore throat, palpitations, shortness of breath, abdominal pain, alternating diarrhea and constipation (irritable bowel syndrome), urinary frequency and urgency (interstitial cystitis), color changes in the hands and feet, and unexplained numbness or tingling in the extremities. Many of these symptoms appear to be due to subtle imbalances in the autonomic nerve system of the body.

There are no specific blood tests or scans that make a diagnosis of fibromyalgia. Rather, it is a clinical diagnosis meaning that it is diagnosed based solely on the clinical history, physical exam, and by excluding other possibilities.

The most important first step in the treatment of fibromyalgia is for an affected individual to understand and accept the diagnosis. Once an individual is made aware that what they have is an objectively real condition and that their symptoms are not "all in their head," then they can begin the process of getting better.

The next step is for the person with fibromyalgia to understand that they can get better and to accept that they will play a crucial role in this process. There are several main focuses of the treatment process including:

- Exercise
- Stretching
- Addressing sleep problems.
- Address psychosocial stressors.

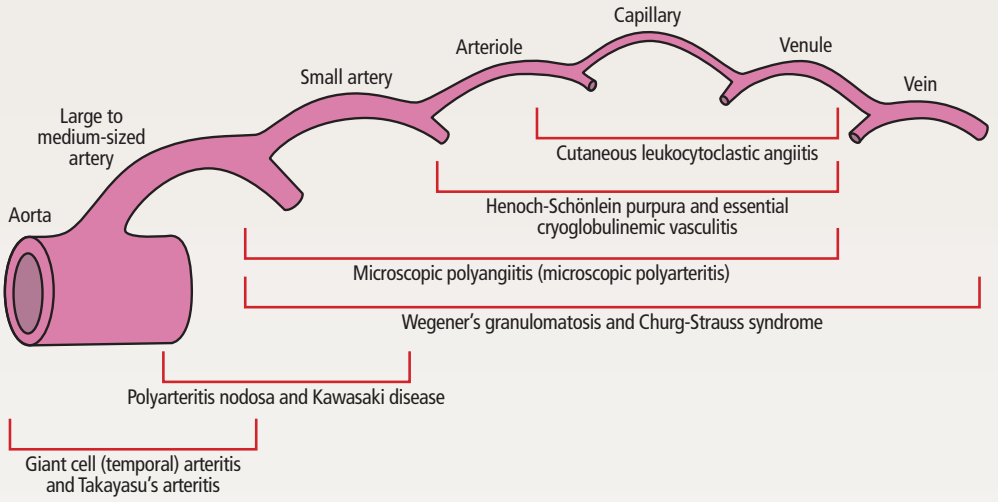
Medications are of secondary importance to the above-mentioned interventions and, at most, should be thought of as a bridge while waiting for these other strategies to bear fruit. There are several FDA-approved medications for fibromyalgia including Lyrica, Cymbalta, and Savella. These generally have to be started at a very low dose and increased slowly. Other medications sometimes used include Tramadol, muscle relaxants, and sleep aids. The use of narcotics is discouraged as some studies have shown that they can paradoxically increase pain over time in fibromyalgia.

With the right approach, tailored to the individual, fibromyalgia is a surmountable problem. Most importantly, in all cases, the patient should never lose hope for a better future.

RHEUMINATIONS:

What is Vasculitis?

WRITTEN BY JUSTIN PENG, MD, FACR



Vasculitis literally means inflammation of the blood vessels. It is a general term that refers to a group of uncommon diseases that affect the vascular systems. Vasculitis can be a disease process in and of itself, or it can be secondary to many other types of rheumatic diseases that we treat. When the blood vessels become inflamed, they become weakened, stretched, damaged, and can either increase or narrow in size.

Vasculitis can affect people of any age, but some types occur more in certain age groups and ethnicities. The causes of most types of vasculitis is unknown, but is thought to be an autoimmune disease, where the body is under attack by its own immune system. Examples include vasculitis that affects the skin, eye, lungs, brain, nerves or other internal organs. It can range from very mild to quite severe. The symptoms are extremely varied, depending on what organ is involved.

The figure above lists many of the different types of vasculitis and the type and size of the blood vessels that are affected by that specific form of vasculitis. For example, Cutaneous Leukcytoclastic Vasculitis affects the smallest blood vessels and can cause rashes including palpable purpura, nodules or ulcers. On the other hand, Giant Cell Arteritis and Takayasu's arteritis affects the larger arteries and can cause more serious neurological and cardiovascular symptoms.

Treatment of vasculitis depends on the which organs are affected. When the vasculitis is a result of an allergy, it may go away on its own. If it affects organs such as the lungs, brain or kidney, then aggressive treatment may be required, including corticosteroids. Sometimes medications that help suppress the immune system are used in order to minimize the use of corticosteroids. Fortunately, with current therapies, the outcome of vasculitis is often good.

RHEUMORS

A NEWSLETTER FOR PATIENTS

Late Fall 2012

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RHEUMORS

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