
Book reviews

Classic Papers in Rheumatology

Editors: P. Dieppe, F.A. Wollheim, H.R. Schumacher, Jr.
London, Martin Dunitz Ltd 2002, ISBN 1-901865-48-7. pgs. 452

The editors open their preface with the observation that we are currently “drowning in information but thirsting for knowledge”. The main cause of the flood is the advent of electronic databases which allow immediate access to all the published literature on any subject that may be of interest to us. This facility had inundated us with dozens of scientific journals and hundreds of articles and reviews that compete monthly for our attention. However, simply reading the current literature cannot provide us with a sufficiently deep understanding of a given subject. Knowledge of the historical background and, in particular, of the earlier studies that first shed light on concepts we now take for granted is essential to those pursuing excellence in the field. This book presents readers with some classic papers that give early descriptions of key findings, diseases and phenomena of relevance to clinical rheumatology.

The authors, who are all experts in their field, have chosen the most important papers in 27 areas of rheumatology. Each area corresponds to a separate chapter, in which up to 13 classic papers published between the 1940s and the present are included. Each chapter begins with a short introduction to the subject and explains the choice of the selected papers. Each classic paper is then presented following a uniform format comprising the headings “Summary”, “Key message”, “Why it’s important”, “Strengths”, “Weaknesses” and “Rele-

vance”, to facilitate its reading and understanding. Additional references are provided to help interested readers explore the literature further.

The contents are divided into four general sections. In Section I the impact of technology, ranging from the development of simpler clinical outcome measures to the most recent progress in clinical genetics as applied to rheumatology, is analyzed. Section 2 is devoted to a description of the major disease entities, and provides information on the most important literature that has appeared over the years in each area. In Section 3 local musculoskeletal syndromes, such as back pain, soft tissue disorders, fibromyalgia, and miscellaneous disorders are covered. Section 4 is concerned with therapy for the rheumatic diseases, and outlines crucial developments in drug therapy, as well as in patient educational and physical therapy options.

This book promotes the awareness of historical developments in clinical rheumatology and therefore can help to add depth to our present clinical work, clinical research, and teaching.

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All About Osteoarthritis: The Definitive Resource for Arthritis Patients and Their Families

Nancy E. Lane and Daniel J. Wallace
New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, ISBN 0-19-513873-2

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common of all the rheumatic conditions, accounting for 60% of patients under the care of a physician for musculoskeletal complaints. Moreover, OA is one of the most important causes of hospitalization, missed work days, disability and impairment of self-perceived quality of life. For all of these reasons and also given the increasing age of the world's population, since symptomatic OA preferentially affects people over 65, it can be considered a significant public health problem. Despite the fact that it is so widespread, however, OA is little understood by patients suffering from the disease and is underdiagnosed by the physicians and other health professionals who must recognise and deal with the problem.

Information about OA and about rheumatic diseases generally is furnished by textbooks addressed to the medical student and the physician, by newspaper columns and articles aimed at the general public, and by booklets distributed by

disease foundations. Patient-oriented books on rheumatology are almost totally lacking.

To fill this gap, N.E. Lane and D.J. Wallace have co-authored a book aimed at the patient and his concerns, but one that will also be useful for physicians, medical students and health professionals. Both authors are well known rheumatologists engaged in research on OA, ranging from clinical studies to issues relating to patients and clinical practice. The book is one of the latest in an outstanding series edited by Oxford University Press that since 1995 has already covered the topics of lupus, fibromyalgia, scleroderma, osteoporosis and Sjögren's syndrome.

This book is praiseworthy because its presentation of the scientific and medical material is scrupulously accurate, and at the same time quite accessible to the lay reader, even those to whom English is a second language. It is neither overly technical nor overly simplified, and therefore offers a useful

resource in addition for anyone in the medical and allied health professions engaged with this disease. The book is fully illustrated, and the figures, diagrams, photographs and diagnostic images (biopsies, x-rays, MRI images, etc.) greatly enhance the text and aid in its comprehension.

The book is divided into six parts. Part I provides a full description of OA, how it differs from other forms of arthritis, and the various risk factors predisposing to this condition. Part II discusses the tissues that may be involved (bone and cartilage) and the processes underlying OA damage.

Part III describes the symptoms of OA and explains how the diagnosis is arrived at based on clinical and instrumental findings. The specialized forms of the condition are discussed as well. Part IV provides (with the help of many detailed illustrations) a thorough description of the disease process.

Part V reviews the current approach to the management of all aspects of OA. This section is very up-to-date and helpful. It begins with a description of exercises to improve the range of motion in specific OA joints (with figures to illustrate the proper movements), and goes on to discuss pharmacological therapy (systemic and local drugs). The authors provide an

analysis of when orthopedic surgery may be necessary, the alternative therapies available and how effective they may be, and finally give helpful advice on which health professionals patients may turn to for treatment.

Part VI describes the handicaps and work disabilities caused by OA and how these can be prevented or minimized, the prognosis of the disease in different cases, and prospects regarding the latest research on possible treatments (medical and surgical) for OA patients. The book closes with two useful appendices: the first is a complete glossary defining the medical terms used in the text, and the second provides a list of various resources for readers who may wish to study specific topics in greater detail.

We highly recommend this book to both patients and health professionals because it covers the topic of osteoarthritis thoroughly and rigorously, and at the same time in a clear and simple language that makes it eminently readable.

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Announcements

Xth European Pediatric Rheumatology Congress

2-5 October 2003, *Lago Maggiore, Italy*

Topics: Scleroderma, synovial inflammation, pathogenesis of SLE, Lyme disease, Behçet's disease, recurrent fevers, dermatomyositis, long-term outcome in JIA, surgery in JIA, syndromic arthropathies, osteoporosis, CINCA, vasculitis, new and old therapies, controversies and common errors in pediatric rheumatology.

Organising secretariat: ECON Srl, via della Moscova 16, 20121 Milan, Italy.

Tel: +39 (02) 29.005.745; Fax: (02) 29.005.790

E-mail: econsrl@tin.it

Arthritis in the Elderly: New perspectives in diagnosis and treatment

9-11 October 2003, *Milan, Italy*

Topics: Epidemiology, immunopathogenetic mechanism and clues, clinical patterns, biochemistry, pharmacological treatment (DMARD and symptom-related drugs), rehabilitation, social and drug-related economic problems.

Organising secretariat: O.I.C. S.r.l., via Fatebenefratelli 19, 20121 Milan, Italy.

Tel: +39 (02) 65.71.200; Fax: (02) 65.71.270

E-mail: eldrheum@oic.it

XI International Conference on Behçet's Disease

and

III International Convention for Patients with Silk Road Disease (Behçet's Disease)

27-31 October 2004, *Antalya, Turkey*

Organising secretariat: FIGUR Congress and Organisation Services Ltd. fi. Ayazmaderesi Cad. Karadut sok. No:7 80888 Dikilitas-Istanbul, Turkey

Tel: +90 (0212) 258-6020; Fax: 258-6078;

E-mail: behcet2004@figur.net

Website: <http://www.behcet2004.org>

IV International Congress on Autoimmunity

3-7 November 2004, *Budapest, Hungary*

Organising secretariat: KENES International, 17 Rue du Cendrier, P.O. Box 1726, CH-1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland.

Tel: +41 22 908-0488; Fax: 732-2850;

E-mail: autoim04@kenes.com

Website: www.kenes.com/autoim2004