
Preface

Caring for the rheumatoid patient has been an integral part of a hand surgeon's practice. In the course of the last two decades, improvement in medical management by having innovative medications such as the biologic disease-modifying drugs has markedly decreased the rate of surgery for rheumatoid patients. These biologic medications are highly effective in decreasing synovitis and deformities that were commonly seen prior to the introduction of these medications. However, the success in applying biologics for rheumatoid arthritis does not diminish the role of surgeons in performing reconstructive procedures because some patients may be refractory to these medications, whereas others may have a delay in developing the typical deformities that invariably may still develop over time.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a worldwide disease. Many countries cannot afford the use of these highly expensive biologic medications, and surgical expertise is still needed to restore hand function. Training in the rheumatoid hand is much needed in Eastern Europe, Asia, and South America where the care of the rheumatoid hand is still in its infancy. This much anticipated textbook on the care of rheumatoid arthritis is the first of its kind, by including contributions from world experts on the care of the rheumatoid hand. All the authors and I strive to present concepts in reconstructing the rheumatoid hand, wrist, and the elbow. Additionally, we feel the care of rheumatoid arthritis patients is a collaborative effort between rheumatologists and surgeons in combating the devastating effect of this disease on our patients' quality of life. We are indebted to our rheumatology colleagues in sharing their expertise with us in this seminal textbook.

This textbook is an invaluable teaching tool for the new generation of surgeons and rheumatologists who may not have sufficient experience in evaluating and treating rheumatoid patients with these deformities that are becoming much less common in the developed world. Similarly, for those countries that still do not have the resources for intensive and costly medical treatment, understanding the pathophysiology, anatomy, and outcomes of surgical treatment is critical in the evaluation and care for the rheumatoid population. Furthermore, this textbook can be helpful to rheumatologists who should also understand surgical possibilities so that they can refer patients for surgical consultation in the early phase of the disease rather than when the deformities are so severe that options are limited.

All of the esteemed authors in this volume have made the care of rheumatoid arthritis a key component of their practices. I asked the authors to present unbiased opinions that are evidence based to share with the world the current concepts in the management of rheumatoid patients. I would very much like to acknowledge my development editor, Connie Walsh, at Springer for her dedicated stewardship of this textbook. Furthermore, I am indebted to my research assistant, Alexandra Mathews, whose guidance and care of this manuscript is unparalleled. I am grateful to my rheumatology patients who entrusted their care to me, and I am equally appreciative of my long-term rheumatology friend, Dr. David Fox, Chief of Rheumatology, University of Michigan, and his faculty who embraced me in conducting evidence-based outcomes research for the past two decades. Our friendship and collaboration is a testament of the combined effort between specialties to provide our patients with comprehensive care. This volume strives to demystify the care of the rheumatoid patient for rheumatologists and surgeons until such time when a cure is found for this disease.

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