Editorial

50th Year of Publication: Progress in Rheumatology During the 2010s

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In this edition of The Journal of Rheumatology, I will be bringing to your attention the following 6 articles from the 2010s that had, and continue to have, a significant impact in rheumatology. Although I usually choose 3 papers, I have chosen 6 that can be grouped into 3 categories. The first category has a single paper that describes a modification of the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) classification of fibromyalgia (FM), the second category contains 2 papers on the use of the internet and social media in rheumatology, and the third contains 3 papers on long-term outcome studies in rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

The first paper I wish to bring to your attention is “Fibromyalgia criteria and severity scales for clinical and epidemiological studies: a modification of the ACR Preliminary Diagnostic Criteria for Fibromyalgia” by Wolfe et al. This paper described the modification of the ACR 2010 diagnostic criteria for FM to allow for survey research and showed that the modified criteria could be used to diagnose FM in patients with other rheumatic diseases. This paper also describes the development of a Fibromyalgia Symptom Severity Scale, which allows for a quantitative measurement of how FM interferes with patients’ functioning. Although the ACR FM criteria have since been modified and other instruments have been developed, this paper was important in increasing the awareness of the significance of FM in other rheumatic diseases and the importance of quantifying the severity of this illness.

The next group of papers include “An internet-based self-management program with telephone support for adolescents with arthritis: a pilot randomized controlled trial” by Stinson et al and “You Tube for information on rheumatoid arthritis – a wakeup call?” by Singh et al. Internet-based interventions and acquisition of data are now routinely described, but this was not the case in 2010 when Stinson et al investigated the use of an internet-based self-management program for adolescents with arthritis. Adolescents are notoriously resistant to any intervention regarding their arthritis, but they do spend significant amounts of time on the internet. This pilot study demonstrated that an internet-based self-management program was feasible, with high compliance rate, acceptability, and user satisfaction. These pilot data have been reproduced and have led to further modifications of the program and enhanced user satisfaction. An internet-based management program was particularly important when in-person visits were difficult during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The second paper, by Singh et al, showed that by April 2011, there were 102 unique videos with 581,819 views regarding information on RA; approximately 50% of the videos were felt to be useful. This paper highlighted the use of social media for information on rheumatic diseases and the need for awareness of what information is available to patients through social media so that physicians and organizations can help them use the information appropriately.

The third group of papers describes long-term safety and efficacy of 2 medications commonly used to treat RA: rituximab and tofacitinib. The first 2 papers are “Long-term safety of patients receiving rituximab in rheumatoid arthritis clinical trials” by van Vollenhoven et al and “Long-term safety of rituximab: final report of the rheumatoid arthritis global clinical trial program over 11 years” by van Vollenhoven et al. I have included both the initial long-term report, which had a follow-up of up to 5 years, and the second report, which extended the follow-up time to 11 years and had 1246 patients having 5-year follow-up or longer as compared to 97 patients in the initial study, because I feel that serial efficacy and safety reporting are important in helping clinicians with their ongoing decisions on medication use. The third paper, “Safety and efficacy of tofacitinib, an oral Janus kinase inhibitor, for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis in open-label, long-term extension studies” by Wollenhaupt et al, describes the safety and efficacy of tofacitinib after 5963 patient-years, with follow-up of up to 4 years. Subsequent studies have shown the safety and efficacy of tofacitinib as well as other oral Janus kinase inhibitors.

I hope you will read these papers from the 2010s that I have highlighted this month as they are relevant today and will continue to be important in the future.

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