Joint disease is the most common cause of disability and the source of considerable psychological distress. In the United States, 50 million adults complain of joint pain; in 2007, 1.5 million people suffered from rheumatoid arthritis (RA). A chronic inflammatory autoimmune disease of joints, RA can involve almost all organs.  

The link to mental illness 
Mental illness in RA patients often is underdiagnosed and undertreated. These missed opportunities contribute to poor compliance with medical therapy, suboptimal therapeutic response, greater disability, and diminished quality of life.  

Limited mobility, chronic pain, sleep disturbance, fatigue, and immunological factors predispose RA patients to depression and anxiety. The proinflammatory cytokines, tumor necrosis factor-α (TNF-α), interleukin 1 (IL-1), IL-6, and interferon-γ have a role in inducing affective symptoms. There also is a relationship between an elevated IL-17 level and anxiety.  

Research substantiates a relationship between RA and depression. The prevalence of affective illness is approximately 6% among the general population, and 13% to 30% among RA patients. In arthritic populations, 52% exhibit depression and anxiety; joint discomfort contributes to insomnia in 25% to 42% of cases.  

Arthritic pain persists despite suppressed inflammation, which suggests involvement of the CNS. Increased levels of IL-6 and TNF-α can cause insomnia and affect pain perception. Decreased conditioned pain modulation, a lower pain threshold, and pressure pain intoler-
References


Depression continued from page 57

References


