

A Case Report of
Rheumatoid Arthritis
Interprofessional Education

S.G.

Case Writer
IPE Pain Initiative

**“Just listen to your patients.”
A Case Report of Chronic Pain**

Presenting Condition: “I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis in 1992...both a gift and a burden on my family.”

S.G. is a 63 y/o female wife, mother, grandmother, writer, and publisher who has rheumatoid arthritis (RA). In 1991, S.G. began suffering from progressive debilitating pain with swollen joints starting in her shoulder and spreading to her knees reporting: “My knees swelled up the size of basketballs”. Although she could barely get into and out of a car, she continued to go to work each day. Her general practitioner suggested that she had torn both of her menisci, leading her to surgery on both knees. Following surgery, S.G. went through physical therapy for several months. Her physical therapist could see that she was doing all of the exercises and the muscles were responding, but she was still in pain; he suggested that she receive a test for RA. Upon finding a Rheumatoid Factor, S.G. was referred to a rheumatologist. The rheumatologist immediately diagnosed her with RA and started her treatment with plaquenil; this medication failed to completely stop the inflammatory process responsible for her excruciating pain. Although reluctant to begin an aggressive therapy, S.G. began treatment with a new medication called methotrexate, which “started to attack the disease and I started to respond as the swelling went down”. She describes that although this treatment was working, her “bigger joints” (knees and shoulders) had been damaged from the disease so she still experienced pain but not the “excruciating” pain from the swelling, inflammation, and fatigue. S.G. recently had bilateral knee replacement surgery—an intervention that has significantly alleviated her pain symptoms.

Patient Profile:

Age: 63

Height: 5’7”

Weight: 128 lbs.

Language(s): English

Condition(s): Rheumatoid Arthritis (1992)

Past Medical History

Past Illnesses: 1989 Thyroid Cancer (removed)

Injuries: multiple fractures: left arm 1959 and 2008; right arm 2003

Immunizations: up to date on all; pneumonia vaccine (July, 2012)

Medications:

- Prescribed: Levothyroxine Sodium (generic) 125 mg (daily)
Methotrexate 0.6 cc, 25 mg/ml (once a week (injection))
Lodine (etodolac) 300 mg as needed (2 daily)
Leucovorin 0.25 mg (once a week (half a tablet))
Niacin 500mg (daily)
Macrochantin 50mg (1 tablet (before or after sex as needed))
Lorazepam 0.5mg (1 tablet as needed (for sleep))

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- Over the counter: Calcium with Vitamin D 500mg (daily)

Allergies: unknown

Surgical History: 1979 polypectomy
1989 laproscopic surgery
1989 thyroidectomy
1992 bilateral knee arthroscopy
1994 shoulder arthroplasty
1998 hysterectomy
2012 bilateral knee arthroplasty

Hospitalizations: pneumonia

Personal Health Influencing Behaviors:

Diet: healthy, well-balanced diet

Caffeine Use: three cups per day

Alcohol Use: one glass of wine per week

Nicotine Use: smoked cigarettes for ten years; quit in 1976; none currently

Illicit Drug Use: none

Exercise: walks two miles, four times per week

Sleep Patterns: difficult to fall asleep and does not take naps

Family Medical History: no relevant family history

Social History and Lifestyle: S.G. lives with her husband, has one son, and is a grandmother. She is an author and also owns and maintains rental properties with her husband. S.G. founded *The Chronic Pain Support Group of Southern Maine* over fifteen years ago. She enjoys hiking, walking, eating various foods, and going on trips with her husband. S.G. has many friends that she loves to visit with, and will often go on walks with one of them about three times per week—in addition to her dog sitting/walking.

Glossary of Terms

1. **Arthroplasty:** surgical remodeling of a joint.
2. **Leucovorin:** is used to prevent the harmful effects of methotrexate when methotrexate is used to treat certain types of cancer and rheumatologic disease.
3. **Levothyroxine Sodium:** is used to treat hypothyroidism.
4. **Lodine:** is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) used to treat pain caused by arthritis.
5. **Lorazepam:** is a benzodiazepine used to treat anxiety, anxiety with depression, and insomnia.
6. **Macrodantin:** is an antibiotic used to treat or prevent urinary tract infections.
7. **Methotrexate:** is a disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drug (DMARD). It is used to treat psoriasis, some cancers, rheumatoid arthritis and other forms of inflammatory arthritis. It decreases the pain and swelling of arthritis, and also decreases the damage to joints and long-term disability.
8. **Niacin:** is a B3 vitamin used to lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the blood. It also reduces heart attack risk and narrowing of the arteries in people who have heart disease.
9. **Rheumatoid Arthritis:** a long-term autoimmune disease (body attacking itself) that leads to inflammation of the joints and surrounding tissues. It is characterized by joint pain, morning stiffness, and over time, decrease in joint range of motion.