The general practice guide to autoimmune diseases

The development of autoimmunity and autoimmune diseases is believed to involve interactions between genes, hormones, and the environment and was labeled in 1989 as “The mosaic of autoimmunity”. This complex interplay between the immune system and various stimuli, that comprise the pebble of the mosaic, is controlled by a wide array of mechanisms [1–2]. In the last decade there have been enormous strides in our understanding of autoimmune mechanisms which enabled us, to some extent, to predict and prevent diseases [2–4]. The relationships between environmental factors such as infectious agents, vaccines, adjuvant and drugs as well as hormones such as vitamin-D, ferritin and prolactin that can shift the immune perpendulum toward autoimmune inflammation have been extensively studied [5–10]. Therefore, nowadays we aspire into an era where we can recommend preventive measurements that will ameliorate or postpone autoimmunity. Of which a proper diet, avoidance of exposure to certain hormones (i.e. oral contraceptive) or UV radiation, climatotherapy, and the consumption of vitamin-D have been reported [11–16].

The diagnosis of autoimmune and auto inflammatory diseases has always been a challenging task. The presences of autoantibodies, such as rheumatoid factor, antinuclear and anti-CCP antibodies, as well as newly recognized as anti-pentraxin antibodies, in combination with diverse genetic markers have become central for early and accurate diagnosis of systemic diseases [17–20].

Last but not least the accumulated knowledge regarding systemic and organ specific autoimmune diseases has opened a new horizon for target oriented therapies. Intriguingly, it seems that once immune modulation is concerned the resemblance between autoimmune diseases outweigh their differences. Thus many of these novel targeted interventions were found to be beneficial in more than one autoimmune condition.

In the current book aimed for general practitioners (GPs) we tried, together with well known rheumatologists and autoimmunologists, to focus on what the GPs need to know and when they better refer the patient to the specialist. The EASI organization aimed for standardization of autoantibodies constructed from rheumatologists and autoimmunologists decided to expand the knowledge to the GPs. This is the first book of its kind and we hope to update it in the future.

We hope that you will enjoy reading the book.

Yehuda Shoenfeld,
Pier Luigi Meroni
References


Dr. Yehuda Shoenfeld (MD FRCP)

Dr. Yehuda Shoenfeld was the head of a Department of Medicine since 1984 until March 2011, and he has founded in 1985 and is now heading the Zabludowics Center for Autoimmune Diseases, at the largest hospital in Israel — the Sheba Medical Center, which is affiliated to the Sackler Faculty of Medicine in Tel-Aviv University, in Israel. Dr. Shoenfeld is the Incumbent of the Laura Schwarz-Kipp Chair for Research of Autoimmune Diseases in Tel-Aviv University.

His clinical and scientific works focus on autoimmune/rheumatic diseases, and he has published more than 1600 papers. His articles had over 25,000 citations. He has authored and edited 25 books, some of which became cornerstones in science and clinical practice, such as “The Mosaic of Autoimmunity”, “Infections and Autoimmunity” and the textbook “Autoantibodies” and “Diagnostic criteria of autoimmune diseases”, all of which were published by Elsevier and sold by the thousands.

He is the founder and Editor of the “Autoimmunity Reviews” (Elsevier) (Impact factor 6.4) and Co-Editor of “Journal of Autoimmunity” (Impact factor 9.2). Dr. Shoenfeld has educated a long list of students (> 20) being Professors and heads of departments and institutes.

Professor Pier Luigi Meroni

Pier Luigi Meroni is a Full Professor of Rheumatology at the University of Milan and Director of the Department of Rheumatology, Istituto G. Pini, Milan. He received his medical degree in 1972 from the same institution, completing postgraduate training in clinical immunology in 1975, and haematology in 1979.

Professor Meroni received the Roussel Prize in 1987 for studies on age-associated immunodeficiency, and the EULAR Research Prize in 2005 for etiopathogenesis studies of the anti-phospholipid syndrome. He has been Chairman of the IUUIS/WHO/AF/CDC Sub-Committee for the standardisation of diagnostic tests for rheumatic diseases, a member of the ACR ANA Task Force, and the Italian representative for the EASI group (European autoimmunity standardisation initiative forum). In addition, Professor Meroni is a member of the Scientific Committee of the AESKU Institute of Autoimmunity, a member of the Henry Kunkel Society, and Director of the postgraduate school of specialisation in Rheumatology at the University of Milan.

Professor Meroni has published widely in his field, with over 400 original papers in the literature, over 44 book chapters, and 2 books. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the journals Annals of Rheumatic Diseases, Clinical and Experimental Rheumatology, Autoimmunity, Autoimmunity Review, Lupus, Journal of Autoimmunity, and Current Rheumatology Reviews.
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