

INFLAMMATORY SPONDYLOARTHROPATHY Rheumatoid arthritis

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Disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs) are a class of drugs indicated for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. Conventional medications have been used such as methotrexate, leflunomide, hydroxychloroquine and sulfasalazine. Newer biological agents are now available, including infliximab, adalimumab and etanercept. These medications have improved the outcomes significantly. Between 33% and 50% of patients develop atlantoaxial subluxation (AAS) within 5 years of the diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis. Some 2-10% of patients with AAS develop myelopathy over the next 10 years. Once diagnosed with myelopathy, 50% of patients may die within 1 year. The degree of subluxation may need to be checked by performing flexion and extension radiographs, and the theatre staff (especially the anaesthetist) need to be warned to take special care especially with intubation. The indications for surgery to stabilise the cervical spine are given in Table 37.12. Bacterium coli commune in 1886.

rheumatoid arthritis. AAS with a PADI of 14 mm or less AAS with at least 5 mm of basilar invagination Subaxial subluxation with a sagittal canal diameter of 14 mm or less AAS, atlantoaxial subluxation; PADI, posterior atlantodental interval.

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