

## 20. Rheumatoid Arthritis

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Understand that Rheumatoid Arthritis is an autoimmune inflammatory arthritis that originates in the synovium of diarthroidal joints.
2. Understand that the mechanisms of tissue destruction in Rheumatoid Arthritis involve an interaction between cell-mediated and antibody-mediated immune processes.
3. Understand that although Rheumatoid Arthritis is primarily an articular disease process, it can also exhibit unique extra-articular manifestations.
4. Understand the appropriate use of both conventional DMARDs (**D**isease **M**odifying **A**nti-**R**heumatoid **D**rugs), e.g., Methotrexate, as well as the more recently introduced biologic agents as they relate to intervening in the rheumatoid disease process.

### SUMMARY:

1. Rheumatoid arthritis is the most common primary inflammatory arthropathy, and exhibits well-defined genetic risk factors.
2. Rheumatoid arthritis is a destructive articular disease that causes potentially severe long term morbidity and mortality.
3. The diagnosis of Rheumatoid Arthritis utilizes both serologic disease markers as well as rather unique clinical manifestations of both articular and extra-articular disease.
4. The targeted disruption of autoimmune disease mechanisms utilizing newer biologic agents has had a significant impact on reducing the severity of Rheumatoid Arthritis.