INTRODUCTION
In the 1993 One Day Morbidity Study of Outpatient Care, “Arthritis and rheumatic disorders” accounted for 5.4% of the primary care attendances overall. They accounted for 5.6% of the attendances to GP Clinics and 4.2% of the attendances to the Government Polyclinics.

AGE GROUP, ANATOMICAL REGION AND PATHOLOGY
Given a patient with a musculoskeletal symptom which most commonly is pain around the joint, limb, back or trunk, we subconsciously overlay three different circles as a Venn diagram to create a small area where the three circles overlap. These three circles are the age group, the anatomical region, and the underlying pathology. The classification of musculoskeletal disorders by pathology into trauma, ‘degenerative’, infection, metabolic, malignancy and autoimmune is useful in working out the differential diagnosis. Where the three circles overlap yields the small list of differential diagnosis which will be age and region specific.

Thus, in an old lady of 75 years presenting with a hip pain, we will be thinking of osteoarthritis and if it is acute to ask about a fall or a trip that may have escaped the recollection of the patient. In a young girl of 10 years with a hip pain we may think of a transient synovitis, Perthes disease, septic arthritis if there is an accompanying fever, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis and again trauma.

THIS DISTANCE LEARNING COURSE
In this distance learning course, we have narrowed musculoskeletal disorders to that encountered in the adult and elderly. These have been grouped into 6 units of self study. Some are systemic disorders like osteoporosis (Unit 1). Also, there are conditions which are first indicators of systemic disease (Unit 6). There are also specific musculoskeletal problems which are common in the lower limb (Unit 2), the upper limb (Unit 4) and the back (Unit 5). Therapeutic agents in joint pains (Unit 3) completes the set of 6 units.

To be complete, the distance learning course needs supplementation by opportunities for face-to-face interaction. We have therefore, included firstly, seminars which are sessions to highlight key-points in the knowledge base. Secondly, we have the workshops – they provide opportunities to scrutinize clinical problems and compare the results of our interpretation of such problems as well as to clarify, exchange and share insights in the use of therapeutic agents in managing joint pains. The face-to-face sessions also have question-and-answer slots to provide opportunities to raise related questions and hear answers from both the resource persons and fellow participants.

THE MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS DISTANCE-LEARNING COURSE OUTLINE
The Musculoskeletal Disorders Distance-learning Course outline is given below.

Distance learning units
Unit 1
Osteoporosis
- Presentation of Osteoporosis
- Pointers in assessment
- Complications
- Prevention
- Non-pharmacological aspects of management
- Evidence based pharmacological treatment

Unit 2
Osteoarthritis of knee and hip
- Assessment of symptoms
- Clinical findings
- Investigations
- Treatment

Unit 3
Therapeutic agents in joint pain
- Analgesics and NSAIDs
- Usefulness and Side effects
- Important Interactions
- Prescribing tips

Unit 4
Orthopaedic problems of the upper limb in the primary care setting
Key features in pathology, diagnosis and treatment of the following conditions
- Trigger Finger
- Carpel Tunnel Syndrome
- Tennis and Golfer’s elbow
- Frozen Shoulder

GOH LEE GAN, Senior Consultant Family Physician, Department of Community, Occupational and Family Medicine, National University of Singapore
Unit 5
Low back pain
  • Approach to Symptoms
  • Common Conditions that present as backache
  • Treatment modalities for acute backache
  • Red Flags to look out for

Unit 6
Systemic disease that present as joint pain
  • When to suspect disease and
  • How to assess?
  • Key features, diagnostics and management pointers of some important conditions
  • When to refer?

FACE-TO-FACE SESSIONS

Seminar 1: 12 July 2003
(1) Osteoporosis
(2) Osteoarthritis of the knee and hip
(3) Therapeutic agents in joint pain

Workshop: 12 July 2003
Group A: Case discussion. Osteoporosis: Putting knowledge into practise
Group B: Panel discussion and consensus. Best practices in the prescription of analgesics

Seminar 2: 13 July 2003
(1) Orthopaedic problems of the upper limb
(2) Low back pain
(3) Systemic disease that present as joint pain

Workshop: 13 July 2003
Group A: Case discussion. Osteoporosis: Putting knowledge into practise
Group B: Panel discussion and consensus. Best practices in the prescription of analgesics

OVERVIEW OF MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

National Healthcare Group (NHG) Annual Scientific Congress 2003
“Modern Medicine For Modern Ailments
Prescription for our Nation’s Health”
4 – 5 October 2003 Raffles City Convention Centre

The NHG Annual Scientific Congress is the most important scientific event in NHG and the largest scientific meeting in the Singapore medical calendar. The aim of this congress is to give the medical and scientific community a unique opportunity to explore multidisciplinary perspectives on important issues relating to clinical research and management of major diseases and disorders. The congress will also facilitate exchange and interaction among the different segments of the healthcare community including physicians, surgeons, dentists, nurses, paramedical professionals and research scientists. This event will not only attract members of the local healthcare community but also participants from other parts of Asia and beyond.

Programme Highlights

• Plenary Lecture SARS: Looking Back, Looking Forward by Prof Tan Chorh Chuan, Director, Medical Services, MOH
• Chairman Symposia Life Sciences Cancer, Chromosomes, Genes & Stem-Cell Therapy
  Featuring:
  Prof Robert Levine, Professor of Medicine, Yale University School of Medicine, U.S.A.
  Prof John Wong, Professor of Clinical Oncology, National University Hospital, Singapore
  Prof David Paterson, President and Snr Fellow, Eleanor Roosevelt Institute for Cancer Research, U.S.A.
  Prof Yoshiaki Ito, Director, Oncology Research Institute, Faculty of Medicine, NUS, Singapore
  Prof Nicholas Fisk, Institute of Reproductive and Developmental Biology, Imperial College of London
• SARS Symposium When The Wrong Sun Shines: Clinical features / Pathology Chairs by Dr Liew Cheng Chuan and Dr Leo Yee Sin
  Special Lecture: Enter the SARS Dragon: The HK Perspective by Dr Joseph Sung
  The Lions Share: SARS in Singapore, by Dr Leo Yee Sin
  The Final Arbiter: Post-mortem findings I by Dr Paul Chu, Post-mortem findings II by Dr Angela Chong
• Dermatology Pigmentation Symposium, Occupational Dermatitis Symposium
• A Multidisciplinary Approach to Obesity Management
• Geriatrics and Health Management
• Paediatrics for General Practice
• Preventive Health Redefining the GPs Role

CME points
This event will be accredited with up to 8 CME points

Registration Fee
Registration Fee will be waived for:
All NHG Staff (including NUS Academic Faculty), NHG Partners and All local doctors and dentists

For more information, please contact:
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