

## The Impact of Rheumatoid Arthritis on Individuals and the Society: Exploring the Roles of Hematologists and Nursing Managers in Addressing this Challenge

Aloy-Amadi Oluchi Chinwe<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Medical Laboratory Science, Haematology and Blood Transfusion Unit, Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria

\*Corresponding Author: Aloy-Amadi Oluchi Chinwe

Department of Medical Laboratory Science, Haematology and Blood Transfusion Unit, Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic autoimmune disease with profound consequences for individuals and society. Characterized by persistent joint inflammation and progressive damage, RA leads to physical disabilities, psychological distress, and reduced quality of life. Beyond its impact on individuals, RA imposes a significant societal burden, including increased healthcare expenditures and loss of productivity, resulting in economic challenges. The disease is further complicated by comorbidities such as anemia, cardiovascular disorders, and infections, necessitating a multidisciplinary approach to care. Hematologists play a pivotal role in managing hematological complications and monitoring biomarkers for disease activity. Meanwhile, nursing managers contribute to patient education, adherence to treatment protocols, and coordination of multidisciplinary care. This article examines the wide-ranging impact of RA and explores the roles of hematologists and nursing managers in addressing its multifaceted challenges, offering insights into strategies for improved outcomes and reduced societal burden.

**Keywords:** Rheumatoid Arthritis, Autoimmune Disease, Hematologists, Nursing Managers, Quality of Life, Healthcare Costs, Patient Care.

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### INTRODUCTION

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a systemic autoimmune condition marked by chronic inflammation primarily affecting the synovial joints, resulting in pain, swelling, and deformity. With an estimated global prevalence of 0.5–1.0%, RA disproportionately affects women, with a peak onset between the ages of 30 and 50 years (Smolen *et al.*, 2018). The disease's chronic nature and progressive course have profound implications for individuals and society.

For individuals, RA is associated with significant morbidity, including physical disabilities, chronic pain, and reduced life expectancy. It is also linked to psychological distress, including depression and anxiety, further diminishing quality of life (Matcham *et al.*, 2014). On a societal level, RA contributes to considerable economic challenges through increased healthcare costs and loss of productivity. The annual

societal cost of RA is estimated to reach billions of dollars globally (Cross *et al.*, 2014).

The management of RA requires a multidisciplinary approach, involving rheumatologists, hematologists, nursing managers, and allied health professionals. Hematologists are integral in diagnosing and managing hematological abnormalities such as anemia and monitoring inflammatory markers like erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) and C-reactive protein (CRP). Nursing managers, on the other hand, ensure the delivery of patient-centered care, focusing on education, support, and adherence to treatment plans. This article explores the impact of RA on individuals and society, highlighting the vital roles of hematologists and nursing managers in mitigating its challenges.

### Impact of Rheumatoid Arthritis Physical and Functional Limitations

RA's hallmark features include persistent joint pain, stiffness, and swelling, which progressively limit

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mobility and functionality. Advanced stages of the disease often lead to joint deformities, loss of independence, and reliance on assistive devices (Dougados *et al.*, 2014). These physical limitations hinder daily activities, reducing individuals' ability to engage in personal, social, and professional responsibilities.

### **Psychological Impact**

The chronic pain and unpredictable nature of RA contribute to significant emotional distress. Depression and anxiety are prevalent among RA patients, affecting nearly 30–40% of the population (Matcham *et al.*, 2014). This psychological burden is exacerbated by social isolation and the stigma associated with visible physical disabilities.

### **Comorbidities and Morbidity**

RA increases the risk of several comorbid conditions, including cardiovascular diseases, infections, and osteoporosis. Anemia of chronic disease is particularly common, affecting up to 60% of RA patients, and contributes to fatigue, reduced exercise tolerance, and poor overall outcomes (Birrell *et al.*, 2021).

### **Economic Costs**

RA imposes substantial direct and indirect costs on society. Direct costs include expenses for medications, hospitalizations, and outpatient care, while indirect costs arise from absenteeism, loss of productivity, and early retirement. A study by Cross *et al.* (2014) estimated that the global economic burden of RA exceeds \$40 billion annually.

### **Healthcare System Strain**

The chronic and progressive nature of RA necessitates long-term care, including regular monitoring and adjustments in therapy. This places a significant strain on healthcare systems, particularly in low-resource settings where access to biologic therapies and specialized care may be limited.

### **Role of Hematologists in Managing Rheumatoid Arthritis**

#### **Diagnosis and Monitoring**

Hematologists play a key role in the early diagnosis of RA through the assessment of biomarkers such as ESR, CRP, and rheumatoid factor (RF). These markers are also critical for monitoring disease activity and therapeutic responses (Singh *et al.*, 2016).

#### **Management of Hematological Complications**

RA is frequently associated with hematological abnormalities, including anemia, thrombocytosis, and neutropenia. Hematologists are essential in managing these complications and addressing rare conditions such as Felty's syndrome, which involves splenomegaly and neutropenia (Birrell *et al.*, 2021).

### **Research and Innovation**

Hematologists contribute to clinical research focused on understanding the hematological aspects of RA and identifying novel biomarkers. This research is pivotal in developing targeted therapies and improving diagnostic accuracy (Smolen *et al.*, 2018).

### **Role of Nursing Managers in Rheumatoid Arthritis Care**

#### **Patient Education and Support**

Nursing managers provide essential education on RA, treatment options, and lifestyle modifications. By empowering patients with knowledge, they enhance adherence to treatment plans and encourage self-management (Bech *et al.*, 2017).

#### **Care Coordination**

Nursing managers act as liaisons between various healthcare professionals, ensuring seamless care delivery. They also coordinate follow-up appointments, monitor patient progress, and address any barriers to accessing care.

#### **Advocacy and Policy Development**

Through advocacy, nursing managers influence policies that improve access to medications and support services for RA patients, particularly in underserved areas. They also promote awareness campaigns to educate the public about RA's impact and the importance of early intervention.

### **Collaborative Strategies for Mitigating RA Burden**

#### **Promoting Early Diagnosis**

Public health initiatives aimed at raising awareness about RA symptoms can facilitate early diagnosis and intervention, preventing irreversible joint damage and reducing long-term costs (Smolen *et al.*, 2018).

#### **Expanding Access to Biologic Therapies**

Policies that promote affordable access to biologic and targeted therapies can significantly improve patient outcomes, particularly in low-income settings.

#### **Implementing Community-Based Programs**

Community health programs focusing on rehabilitation, vocational training, and mental health support can enhance patients' quality of life and reduce societal burden.

#### **Leveraging Technology**

Telemedicine platforms can improve access to care for RA patients in remote areas, ensuring timely diagnosis and monitoring.

## **CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Rheumatoid arthritis is a multifaceted disease with far-reaching implications for individuals and society. While advancements in treatment have improved outcomes, the burden of RA remains

significant. Hematologists and nursing managers are indispensable in addressing these challenges, offering expertise in managing complications, coordinating care, and advocating for systemic changes.

Future research should focus on identifying novel therapeutic targets and improving diagnostic tools. Additionally, healthcare systems must adopt innovative models of care that prioritize patient-centered approaches and equitable access to resources. By addressing these priorities, we can mitigate the impact of RA and improve the lives of those affected by this debilitating condition.

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