

Book Review

The Rheumatology Handbook for Clinicians (3rd edition)

Lori Albert, ed. Brush Education Inc., 2022, 480 pages

Reviewed by Philip A. Baer, MDCM, FRCPC, FACP

While you can look up anything and everything online, a trusted guide to rheumatology diagnosis and therapy with a Canadian lens remains a needed and valuable tool for all healthcare professionals, irrespective of professional field of practice or experience level. Building upon the success of the prior two editions, the latest edition of the Handbook is endorsed by the CRA and remains a pocket-sized guide to our fascinating field. Seven sections cover common presentations of rheumatic diseases, rheumatologic manifestations of other diseases, investigative testing in rheumatology, therapeutics, rheumatologic emergencies, physical examination, and joint injection and aspiration techniques. The latter section, with its clear photos and emphasis on joint landmarks, will appeal to anyone who remains comfortable with performing joint procedures without imaging guidance.

The authors are a who's who of Canadian rheumatology leaders. All but one is an academic physician: the sole exception being Dr. Michael Blackmore, a community rheumatologist in Toronto, who wrote a comprehensive summary of rheumatologic manifestations of HIV disease.

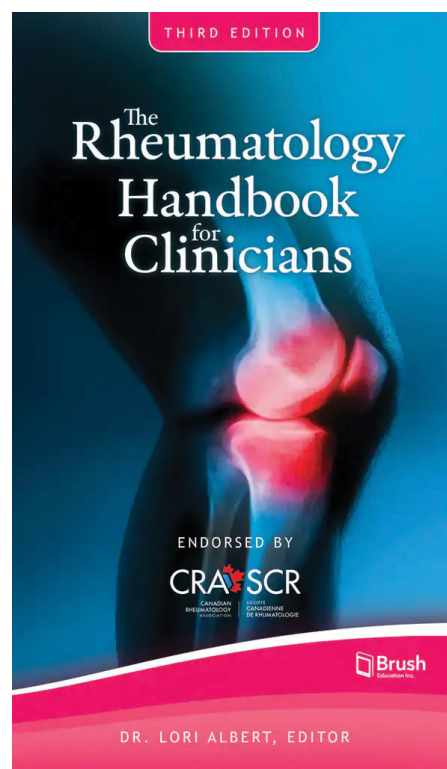
Close to half the book appropriately covers the approach to diagnosis and the rheumatology physical examination. As we all know, the patient history is by far the most important aspect to get right, and 90% of the time, we have homed in on the correct diagnosis before examining the patient. Physical examination is divided into the screening musculoskeletal (MSK) examination and the detailed examination of specific joints, all well illustrated and of great value to non-rheumatologists in particular. The third largest section covers diagnostic testing and should be required reading in all primary care training programs, as this subject engenders the greatest handwringing among practicing rheumatologists bombarded with referrals for weakly positive RF and ANA tests, often ordered inappropriately.

COVID-19 is covered, and other updated sections include new therapeutics, and emerging conditions such as immune-mediated adverse effects of cancer immunotherapy.

All chapters feature bulleted lists of key points, tables of relevant information, and clear diagrams illustrating such things as classification criteria, patterns of joint involvement, and organ manifestations of different syndromes.

Whether you keep the handbook in your pocket (for those still wearing a traditional white lab coat), next to your computer on your desk, or on your bookshelf, I know you will find it to be an excellent resource for yourself, your trainees, the arthritis health professionals you work with, and particularly your non-rheumatologist colleagues in primary care.

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