

## **Argus Orthopaedic Zone**

### **Joint Problems Can Affect Your Eyes?**

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*Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

Be honest now, you thought Orthopaedic Surgeons only knew about bones. Well, as it turns out I have to know about more than just the musculoskeletal system!

Rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune inflammatory musculoskeletal diseases affect lots more than the joints.

Rheumatic disease can be manifested in the eyes causing many disorders that if left untreated can have very serious consequences.

#### **Many Types of Arthritis**

Readers of this column have learned that there are many different types of arthritis. Some of them seriously affect the eyes. You should not ignore any of the conditions we cover because they can lead to blindness. The errant immune system attacks the eyes as well as the joints. It is not well understood why the eyes are attacked.

#### **Eye Attack**

- **Dry Eye**

Dry eye is most often associated with Rheumatoid Arthritis. It causes chronic burning, redness and eye irritation. It can cause corneal ulceration. If dry eye is present you must be checked for Rheumatoid Arthritis.

- **Scleritis**

Scleritis is inflammation of the blood vessels in the eye's white part. It causes a purple discoloration and sometimes severe pain. It can lead to corneal inflammation. You need to be checked for an autoimmune disease.

- **Iritis**

Inflammation of the iris causes pain, light sensitivity and blurred vision. It is associated with spinal inflammation (spondylitis) and psoriatic arthritis.

#### **Treatment**

My job is to recognize and diagnose autoimmune diseases and associated eye conditions when they occur in my patients. Once I have identified an eye condition associated with an autoimmune disease I have to consult one of our Ophthalmologist colleagues whom I know and trust.

The specialty which directs the overall care of patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis and other autoimmune diseases is Rheumatology which is a subspecialty of Internal Medicine.

#### **Teamwork**

Working together as a team, my patients get the best care. I have never had a problem consulting a colleague to evaluate and treat patient conditions that are beyond my area of expertise. The saying, "Half of being smart is knowing what you are dumb at" is a principle I keep in mind. It has served me well.

### **In Closing**

If you have a rheumatic condition or autoimmune disease and have no eye symptoms that is a false sense of security. I recommend you see an Ophthalmologist every year for an examination. Your eyes are too important not to.

### **Office Website and Argus Orthopaedic Archive**

For a tremendous amount of musculoskeletal and Orthopaedic surgery information check out the office website [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com) which also takes you to Your Orthopaedic Connection. It contains a huge amount of Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information.

In addition, the website has the archive of every article I have written for you in Shepherd Argus. All the articles are listed from most recent back to the first one! Check it out for interesting articles you may have missed.

I appreciate all of you loyal readers and patients, present and future and welcome all newcomers!

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush