

BOOK REVIEW

Pillars of wisdom: ankylosing spondylitis in pocket format from the master

A book review: Muhammad Asim Khan (author), *Ankylosing spondylitis – axial spondyloarthritis*, 1st edn, West Islip, NY, USA: Professional Communications, Inc. (PCI), 2016. 333 pages. USD34.95. www.pcibooks.com

This is a comprehensive book covering all aspects of ankylosing spondylitis (AS) – the disease, its epidemiology, clinical features, diagnosis, management, and pathogenesis – written by one of the world leaders in this field of research. The author, in addition to his academic excellence, brings the patient's first hand experience to the text, since he has struggled with severe AS for more than 60 years as depicted by his ingenious self portrait (Figure 1).

Muhammad Asim Khan has been a leading authority on AS and related spondyloarthropathies since the 1970s. PubMed lists 147 publications under the search term 'Khan MA AND ankylosing spondylitis', starting with a Lancet paper in 1976 (1). He has authored three books and edited two more on AS. He has also authored or coauthored 47 book chapters. He joined the faculty of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, in 1973, and served as a fully tenured Professor of Medicine until 2012, when he was awarded the title of Professor Emeritus of Medicine. The combination of patient, doctor, leading academic, and pedagogic skill in one person is not found every day. It was therefore with great expectation that I read his recent monograph. Would it be possible to cover the many aspects of this large subject in a palatable way without being boring or superficial?

The introductory chapter sets the stage by defining the essential features of AS and related spondyloarthropathies, and wetting the reader's appetite by introducing both human leucocyte antigen-B27 and tumour necrosis factor inhibition. A figure from a recent New England Journal of Medicine paper shows the difference between autoimmunity and autoinflammation. Each of the following 16 chapters contains tables and figures, mostly new or from the very recent literature. The book ends with a chapter with illustrative case series, followed by a chapter listing relevant organizations, starting with ASAS, Assessment of SpondyloArthritis International Society, of which Dr Khan is one of the founding members. Although abbreviations are explained in the text, there is a separate chapter listing abbreviations. The book ends with an index chapter of over 30 pages.

Dr Khan succeeds in presenting primary data and how they are interpreted, allowing the critical reader to form an independent opinion. The book truly presents what was



Figure 1. Muhammad Asim Khan, self-portrait, 1987.

known at the time of printing. The publishing time was only a few months, avoiding the usual lag between writing and publishing date that occurs for most textbooks. And Dr Khan was keen to select a publisher willing to sell the product at a very moderate price of 35 US dollars.

This book is a superb source of in-depth up-to-date information, a must for students and trainees, but also very useful to practising colleagues and allied health professionals.

Reference

1. Khan MA, Kushner I, Braun WE. Letter: low incidence of HLA-B27 in American Blacks with spondyloarthropathies. *Lancet* 1976;1:483.

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