

Clinical Reasoning Scenario 1

Referral

Mary is a 20 year old female complaining of bilateral hand pain and swelling over the Metacarpal Phalangeal Joints (MTPJs) for the last 2 weeks. She takes no prescribed medications.

Further Subjective Information

Insidious onset bilateral hand swelling and pain of the MCPJs for the last 2 weeks. She is struggling with all functional tasks as she has decreased range of motion in both hands, the joints are very stiff to move and it is painful to grip anything. There is a constant swelling and the joints can also be warm and red at times. She has also noticed she is very tired all the time since the symptoms began. She is having to take paracetamol and ibuprofen to take the edge off the pain. She has been off work since the onset of the symptoms.

24 hour pattern

Her hand joints are stiff all day without resolution. The pain is worst in the mornings and eases very slightly around lunchtime. She struggles to get to sleep at night because of the pain and then is awoken regularly as well. Bathing her hands in warm water and doing some gentle movements can free up her hands a little in the morning.

Aggravating/Easing

Any form of activity with her hands aggravates the pain. The stiffness is worse following any period of rest and then frees up with activity, although that is also painful. Activity seems to aggravate the swelling, redness and warmth of the MTPJs.

Past Medical History

She has no known health issues and does not take any prescribed medications. She denies any sexually transmitted infections and use of steroids. She feels well in herself but feels very fatigued which she puts down to a lack of sleep. She feels a little anxious about her symptoms as they are so restrictive. She denies feeling depressed.

She has no personal or family history of psoriasis, iritis/uveitis, crohns/colitis or inflammatory arthropathies. She has not had any previous joint or soft tissue problems or injuries. She has a positive MCPJ squeeze test bilaterally and a positive MTPJ squeeze test on the right foot.

Social Factors

She works as a designer which requires some computer work and some artwork. She has been off work for the duration of the symptoms. She normally attends the gym regularly to keep fit. She doesn't smoke, doesn't drink alcohol and has a BMI of 22.

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Clinical Reasoning Activity

From the case presentation note down your differential diagnosis and the clinical indicators that Mary has:
