

Abstract

Background: Pulmonary involvement is a frequent and among the most severe extra-articular manifestations of rheumatoid arthritis. Rheumatoid arthritis can affect the lung parenchyma, airways and pleura. Pulmonary complications are directly responsible for 10-20% of all mortality in RA patients.

Objective: To highlight the common and important manifestations of rheumatoid lung disease and discuss the recent studies on each.
Data source: Articles on rheumatoid lung disease, reviews done in the American Thoracic Society and European Respiratory Society, Medscape and Uptodate Version 19.3.

Data extraction: This was done over a period of 6 months from November 2011 to April 2012.

Conclusion: A thorough history and examination for pulmonary symptoms and signs should be performed in all RA patients. When abnormalities are found, further investigations are likely to be required to define the process. Lung function tests can be used as the baseline tests to detect those who will need more expensive and/or invasive investigations such as HRCT, bronchoscopy with bronchoalveolar lavage, and transbronchial or surgical lung biopsy, when indicated