

## **Rheumatologic Aspects of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Practical Resource for Physicians in Kuwait and the Gulf region as Recommended by the Kuwait Association of Rheumatology**

Fatemah Baron<sup>1,\*</sup>, Heba Alhajer<sup>2</sup>, Fatemah Abutiban<sup>3</sup>, Mona Almutairi<sup>4</sup>, Adel Alawadhi<sup>5</sup>, Ali Aldei<sup>5</sup>, Adeeba Alherz<sup>5</sup>, Yaser Ali<sup>2</sup>, Saud Alsayegh<sup>6</sup>, Ahmed Dehrab<sup>4</sup>, Aqeel Ghanem<sup>2</sup>, Eman Hajji<sup>5</sup>, Saswan Hayat<sup>2</sup>, Khulood Saleh<sup>7</sup>, Ramia Shaikh-Alsooq<sup>1</sup>, Hoda Tarakmah<sup>2</sup>, Anwar Albasri<sup>3</sup>, Ahmed Alenezi<sup>1</sup>, Naser Alhadhood<sup>7</sup>, Waleed Alkanderi<sup>7</sup>, Ammar Almathkoo<sup>4</sup>, Nora Almutairi<sup>8</sup>, Ali Alturki<sup>3</sup>, Amjad Alkadi<sup>8</sup> and Hussain Behbahani<sup>7</sup>

1Rheumatology Unit, Al-Jahra Hospital, AlJahra, Kuwait; 2Rheumatology Unit, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital, Jabriya, Kuwait; 3Rheumatology Unit, Jaber Alahmad Hospital, South Surra, Kuwait; 4Rheumatology Unit, Adan Hospital, Hadiya, Kuwait; 5Rheumatology Unit, Al-Amiri Hospital, Kuwait City, Kuwait; 6Rheumatology Unit, Military Hospital, Sabhan, Kuwait; 7Rheumatology Unit, Al-Farwaniya Hospital, AlFarwaniya, Kuwait; 8Rheumatology Unit, Al-sabah Hospital, AlSabah, Kuwait

**Abstract:** The Kuwait Association of Rheumatology members met thrice in April 2020 to quickly address and support local practitioners treating rheumatic disease in Kuwait and the Gulf region during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Because patients with rheumatic and musculoskeletal disease (RMD) may need treatment modifications during the COVID-19 pandemic, we voted online for the general guidance needed by local practitioners. In this review, we have addressed patients' vulnerability with rheumatic disease and issues associated with their optimum management. Our recommendations were based on the formulation of national/international guidelines and expert consensus among KAR members in the context of the Kuwaiti healthcare system for patients with RMD. The most recent reports from the World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control, the National Institutes of Health-National Medical Library, and the COVID-19 educational website of the United Kingdom National Health Service have been incorporated. We discuss the management of RMD in various clinical scenarios: screening protocols in an infusion clinic, medication protocols for stable patients, and care for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID infection and whether they are stable, in a disease flare or newly diagnosed. Further, we outline the conditions for the hospital admission. This guidance is for the specialist and non-specialist readership and should be considered interim as the virus is relatively new, and we rely on the experience and necessity more than evidence collection. The guidance presented should be supplemented with recent scientific evidence wherever applicable.