

# Opera glass hands: the phenotype of arthritis mutilans

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## DESCRIPTION

A 51-year-old man was diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis at the age of 18.

For the last 20 years he refused treatment, abandoned any follow-up and was unseen by any health professional. The patient became unable to walk 17 years ago and then went blind 10 years ago.

The patient entered the emergency room prostrated; on examination, he was found cachectic in appearance, with psoriatic skin eruptions and nail

changes, axial ankylosis and hands with 'telescopic fingers' (figures 1 and 2)

Arthritis mutilans is the most severe and destructive form of psoriatic arthritis, range from 3.7% to 6.7% according to different studies.<sup>1</sup> When Digit's articular collapse, it leaves redundant overlying skin in shorter fingers, able of a motion like a telescope—the telescopic finger.

Today, with early diagnosis and easy access to disease modifying antirheumatic drugs, such severe deformities are extremely rare.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 1** Patient's hands: shows redundant skin over shortened fingers and onycholysis and nail pitting is visible.



**Figure 2** Hands X-ray, depicting the major phases of evolution in psoriatic arthritis: pencil in cup images (\*); resorption of bone and dissolution of joints (\*\*); fusion of fingers (\*\*\*).

## Learning points

- ▶ Arthritis mutilans (AM) has been described in association with a wide variety of arthropathies, including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, juvenile idiopathic arthritis, systemic sclerosis, Systemic lupus erythematosus and others, being the first two most commonly associated diseases.<sup>1 2</sup>
- ▶ AM is characterised by an asymmetric pattern of peripheral joint involvement, with a predilection for the interphalangeal and metacarpophalangeal joints of the hand and small joints of the feet.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Radiographically, AM is characterised by the presence of severe bone and joint resorption and deformities.<sup>1</sup>

**Competing interests** None.

**Patient consent** Obtained.

**Provenance and peer review** Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

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**To cite:** Ferreira MB, Sá N, Rocha SM, et al. *BMJ Case Rep* Published online: [please include Day Month Year] doi:10.1136/bcr-2013-200035

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