Rheumatic diseases are among the most common conditions faced by general practitioners and in one form or another afflict over 45 million Americans. The diagnosis and treatment of rheumatic disorders can be enigmatic because they include inflammatory, metabolic, degenerative, infectious, and biomechanical conditions. Given their frequency and ability to cause serious morbidity, and at times mortality, it is important for generalists and all internists to have substantial familiarity with these conditions. The Medical Clinics of North America is an important publication for providing relevant, specialty information to practitioners and learners in broad areas of medicine. The previous issue of The Medical Clinics of North America dealing with rheumatology appeared in 1986. Since then, substantial progress has been made in understanding the pathogenesis of many rheumatic disorders, and some progress has been made in enhancing therapy. In this issue, authors were selected to represent areas of rheumatology that are of interest to the readership. We are hopeful that this issue will provide its readers with a substantial understanding of important human disorders and stimulate their further interest in this fascinating branch of medicine. We would like to express our deep gratitude to the co-authors of this publication, all leaders in their fields. We also thank Ms. Vicki Saito for her editorial expertise.

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