The past few decades have seen many advancements in science that have helped define the role of infection in musculoskeletal diseases. Infection affects a considerable segment of the population, constitutes a significant cause of morbidity and mortality, and adds to the cost of caring for patients with musculoskeletal involvement. Unraveling the mystery of this important correlation aids clinical practitioners in the treatment and prevention of rheumatic diseases. This issue of the *Infectious Diseases Clinics of North America* is dedicated to a current overview of the interesting relationship between infections and the musculoskeletal system.

The opening article by Cuchacovich and colleagues reviews the role of the polymerase chain reaction in the identification of microbial components in a variety of tissues and its potential clinical applications and pitfalls in the diagnosis and management of several disorders. The next two articles, one by Lopez and Lartchenko and one by De La Torre, are devoted to the diagnosis and management of soft tissue infection and septic arthritis. Emphasis is placed on describing and discussing the predisposing risk factors and morbidity and mortality associated with these conditions in the era of newly introduced biologic agents.

An extensive and comprehensive review of imaging techniques in the diagnosis of osteomyelitis by Pineda and colleagues follows. An in-depth review of current imaging techniques with representative studies is presented.

Pathogenic aspects, including the potential role of HLA-B27 antigen, associated clinical syndromes, and diagnostic criteria and therapeutic modalities of reactive arthritis are discussed next by Carter. The potential
benefits and adverse events of antibiotics and tumor necrosis factor-alpha are discussed in detail.

The next article by Alarcón presents an overview of the important role that infection plays in connective tissue disorders. Predisposing risk factors for the development of infection, the effect of infection on morbidity and mortality, and the most common microorganisms involved are thoroughly discussed. Sanzone and Begue next discuss the rheumatologic manifestations of hepatitis C. Hepatitis C can induce a variety of autoimmune and inflammatory musculoskeletal manifestations, and a comprehensive review follows.

The role of retroviruses in the development of arthritis and autoimmune disorders is discussed next. Medina and Moreno discuss the pandemic of HIV that began 25 years ago continues to be a significant health care problem in some parts of the world, especially in Central Africa. The changing clinical spectrum of the musculoskeletal involvement of HIV in developed countries, as well as the development of newer clinical syndromes, such as the immune reconstitution syndrome, is reviewed. Human endogenous retroviruses are extensively reviewed by Gary and Colmegna. Their classification is presented, and their potential implication in the causation of autoimmune disease is discussed.

The final article by Saketkoo and Espinoza discusses the infectious complications associated with the use of biologic agents, particularly tumor necrosis factor-alpha inhibitors. These agents have revolutionized the therapeutic management of rheumatoid arthritis and other connective tissue disorders. A systematic review of implicated pathogens, particularly tuberculosis, clinical presentation in patients being treated with these agents, as well as prevention and treatment strategies are presented.

This issue provides an overview of the major advances that have occurred in the field in the past four years and represents the concerted effort of experts on the topics discussed. I am most grateful to Karen Sorensen, Senior Clinics Editor at Elsevier for her confidence and support in the preparation of this issue.

Luis R. Espinoza, MD
Professor and Chief
Section of Rheumatology
Department of Internal Medicine
Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center
7th Floor, Box E-20
2020 Gravier Street
New Orleans, LA 70112-2822 USA
E-mail address: luisrolan@msn.com