

# Pulmonary Involvement in Collagen-Vascular Disorders

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The family of collagen-vascular diseases comprises a large, heterogeneous group of immune- or autoimmune-mediated inflammatory disorders, also known collectively as connective tissue diseases. The concept was first conceived by the German pathologist Fritz Klinge in the 1930s<sup>1</sup> and was promulgated by the American pathologist Paul Klemperer in the 1940s.<sup>2,3</sup> Although musculoskeletal manifestations are the most frequent clinical features of collagen-vascular disease, pulmonary involvement is not uncommon and may be a major cause of morbidity and mortality.<sup>4-8</sup> Interstitial pneumonitis, often accompanied by or terminating in fibrosis, is the most common pulmonary manifestation of collagen-vascular disease and accounts for an estimated 1600 deaths annually, or about 25% of all deaths from interstitial lung disease.<sup>9</sup> The incidence and type of pulmonary involvement in each individual collagen-vascular disease vary according to the criteria used to ascertain the involvement: clinical, roentgenographic, or pathologic. A definitive diagnosis usually requires histologic documentation of the disease, preferably with open lung biopsies.<sup>10</sup> The major types of collagen-vascular disease are presented in Display 67-1.

## **RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS**

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a systemic disease clinically characterized by symmetric, deforming, and nonsuppurative arthritis, predominantly affecting small peripheral joints. Pulmonary involvement in RA was first described by Ellman and Ball in 1948.<sup>11</sup> In the following 20 years, five major manifestations of rheumatoid lung disease became widely recognized:

1. Pleuritis
2. Pulmonary necrobiotic (*i.e.*, rheumatoid) nodules
3. Rheumatoid pneumoconiosis, or Caplan syndrome

4. Diffuse interstitial pneumonitis and fibrosis
5. Pulmonary vasculitis and pulmonary hypertension.<sup>12-14</sup>

Added to this classic pentad are lymphocytic interstitial pneumonitis and bronchiolitis obliterans organizing pneumonia.<sup>15-17</sup>

### ***Pleuritis***

Pleuritis with effusion occurs usually in active RA with high titers of rheumatoid factor, and most rheumatoid effusions are exudates with low pH and glucose, high protein, and lactate dehydrogenase.<sup>17-20</sup> A needle biopsy of the pleura is seldom diagnostic, but it may be helpful in excluding tuberculous or malignant disease, both of which have biochemical constituents in pleural effusions similar to those of RA.<sup>18-20</sup> Open pleural biopsies usually reveal nonspecific chronic inflammation and fibrosis but may occasionally show the telltale necrobiotic or rheumatoid nodule (Fig. 67-1).

### ***Rheumatoid Pneumoconiosis, or Caplan Syndrome***

This was initially described in 1953 as a typical chest roentgenographic appearance in coal miners with RA.<sup>21</sup> The concept of Caplan syndrome has since been expanded to include RA patients whose lungs have been exposed to inhaled silica.<sup>22,23</sup> It has been suggested that inhaled silica is a weak stimulus for the formation of rheumatoid factor. Independent immunologic studies showed that miners with the classic chest radiographic changes of Caplan syndrome who had no history or clinical evidence of RA had a high proportion of positive rheumatoid factor tests.<sup>22,23</sup> Histologically, the Caplan nodules in rheumatoid pneumoconiosis are similar to the simple rheumatoid necrobiotic nodules, with the addition of black coal dust or silica particles in the centers of the nodules (see Chaps. 34 and 35).

**DISPLAY 67-1. COLLAGEN-VASCULAR DISEASES WITH PULMONARY INVOLVEMENT**

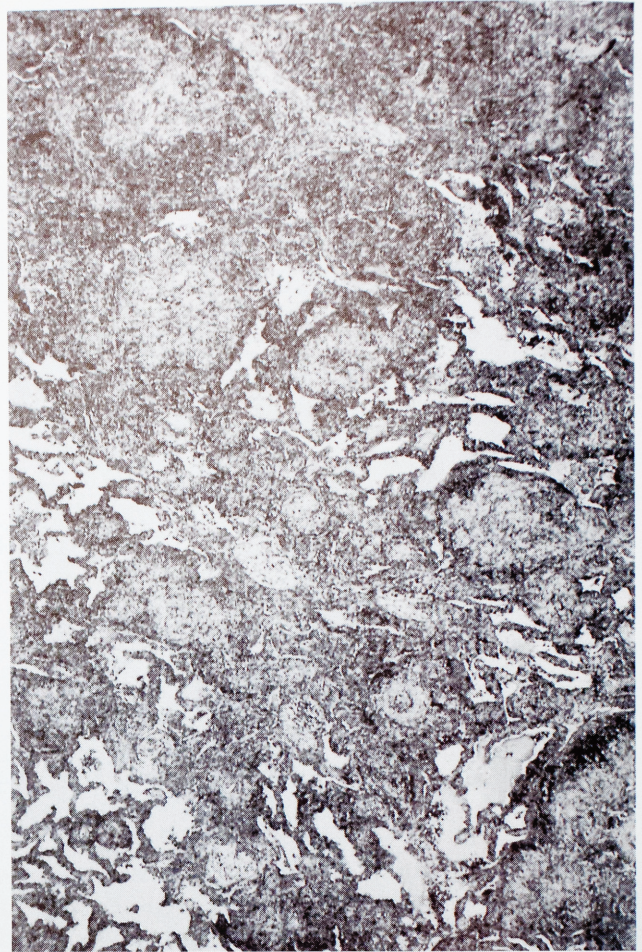
Rheumatoid arthritis  
 Systemic lupus erythematosus  
 Systemic sclerosis (*i.e.*, scleroderma) and the CREST syndrome  
 Dermatomyositis-polymyositis  
 Ankylosing spondylitis

***Diffuse Interstitial Pneumonitis and Fibrosis***

The prevalence of diffuse interstitial pneumonitis and fibrosis in RA ranges from 16% in a clinical survey of unselected patients<sup>24</sup> to 60% of open lung biopsies on unselected volunteers with RA.<sup>25</sup> In chest radiographic studies, the reported incidence of parenchymal rheumatoid lung disease varies from 1.5% to 4.5%,<sup>26,27</sup> whereas up to 40% of RA patients tested may exhibit abnormal pulmonary function tests.<sup>28,29</sup> Such discrepancies suggest that the chest roentgenogram is relatively insensitive in detecting early changes of interstitial lung disease and pulmonary fibrosis.<sup>26-30</sup> The histopathology of rheumatoid interstitial lung disease (Fig. 67-2) is indistinguishable from that of idiopathic usual interstitial pneumonia (UIP),<sup>8,9,14-16,27</sup> including the lymphocytic interstitial pneumonitis variant and end-stage fibrosis and honeycombing.



**FIGURE 67-1.** Pulmonary necrobiotic nodule in rheumatoid arthritis. (H & E stain; low magnification.)



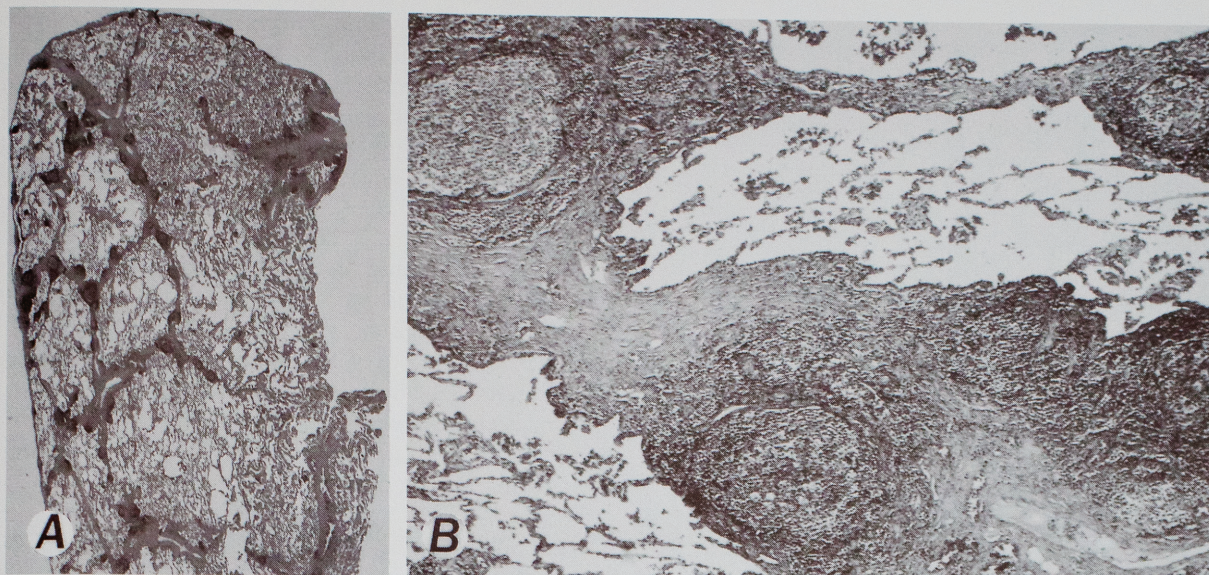
**FIGURE 67-2.** Usual interstitial pneumonia associated with bronchiolitis obliterans organizing pneumonia in rheumatoid arthritis. (H & E stain; low magnification.)

Lymphocytic interstitial pneumonia (Fig. 67-3) occurs more commonly in juvenile RA.

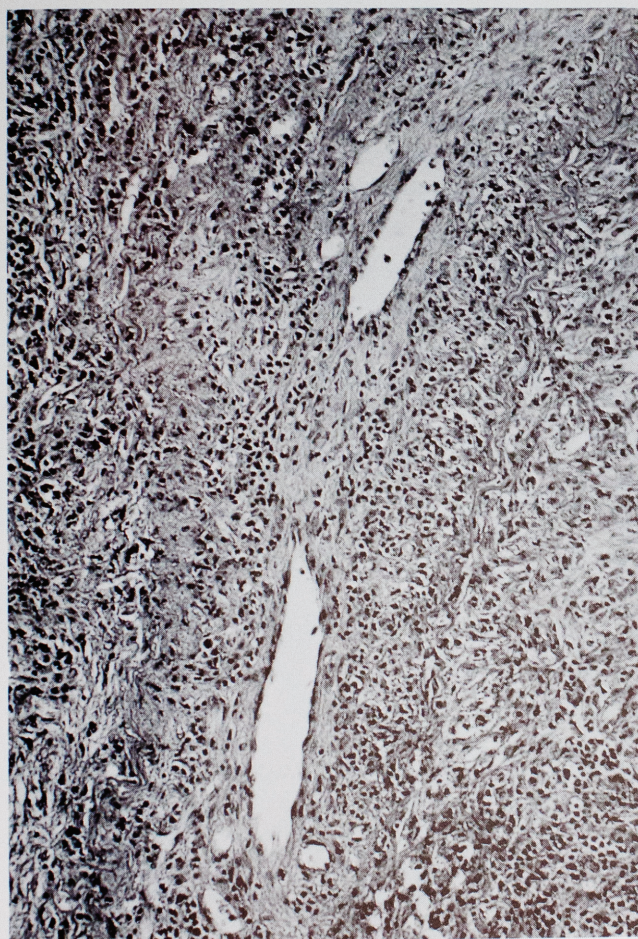
Systemic vasculitis is a well-known clinical manifestation of seropositive RA and is a major cause of morbidity and mortality with this disease.<sup>31,32</sup> Pulmonary vasculitis occurs infrequently in RA, and it is an unfavorable prognostic predictor of the disease.<sup>33</sup> Pulmonary vasculitis in RA (Fig. 67-4) occurs in the absence of significant parenchymal lung disease and is usually unaccompanied by systemic rheumatoid vasculitis; it may be the cause of unexplained pulmonary hypertension in both adult-onset and juvenile RA.<sup>34-40</sup>

***SYSTEMIC LUPUS ERYTHEMATOSUS***

Although Osler, at the turn of the century, had mentioned pulmonary consolidations and hemoptysis in a 24-year-old woman with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE),<sup>41</sup> specific pulmonary lesions of SLE were first described by Rakov and Taylor in 1942.<sup>42</sup> The incidence of pulmonary involvement in SLE, according to subsequent reports, has varied from 9%<sup>43</sup> to 98%,<sup>44</sup> and it is probably in the 20% to 40% range.<sup>45-50</sup> Many of the pulmonary lesions previously attributed to SLE could be explained by alternative causes.<sup>48</sup>



**FIGURE 67-3.** (A) Septal lymphoid hyperplasia and lymphocytic interstitial pneumonia in rheumatoid arthritis. (B) Reactive follicular hyperplasia and septal fibrosis. (H & E stains; low magnifications.)



**FIGURE 67-4.** Vascular invasion by lymphocytes and plasma cells in a patient with rheumatoid arthritis. The adjacent lung tissue is also involved. (H & E stain; low magnification.)

### *Usual Interstitial Pneumonia*

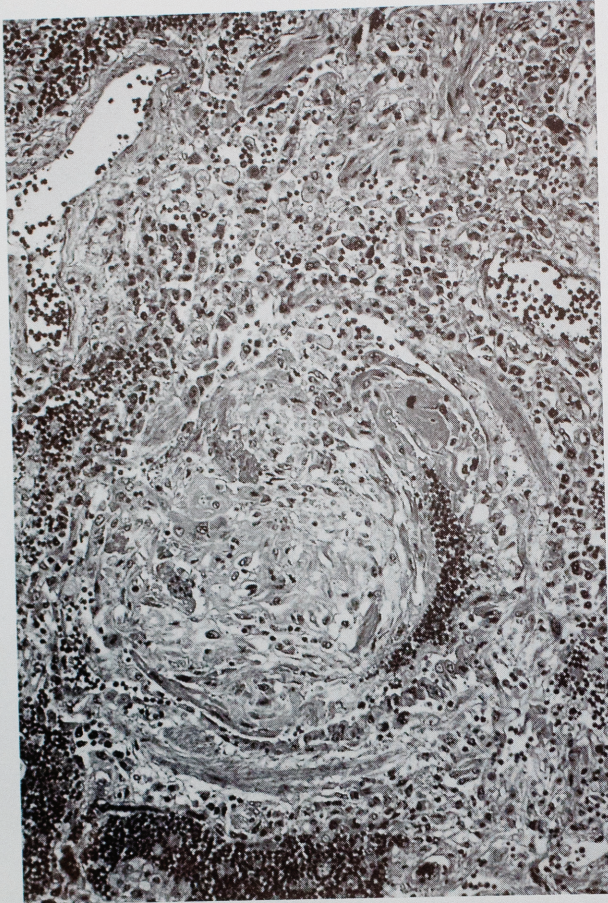
UIP occurs in only 1% to 6% of SLE patients.<sup>9</sup> When diffuse pulmonary fibrosis is present in an SLE patient, the physician should question whether an overlap syndrome or other connective tissue disease might be involved. The possibility of pulmonary complications of antirheumatic drug therapy<sup>51</sup> must also be considered in the differential diagnosis. Among other less common pulmonary manifestations of SLE are bronchiolitis obliterans (Fig. 67-5) and lymphocytic interstitial pneumonitis with pseudolymphoma (Fig. 67-6), both probably immune-mediated diseases.<sup>47,52-55</sup>

### *Vascular Disease*

Vascular disease is a much more common and important pulmonary manifestation of SLE.<sup>44,46,48,56-60</sup> Pulmonary capillaritis with diffuse alveolar hemorrhage (Fig. 67-7), pulmonary vasculitis (Fig. 67-8), and pulmonary hypertension (Fig. 67-9) are a major cause of morbidity and mortality in SLE patients. Immune complexes are thought to have a key role in the pathogenesis of pulmonary vascular disease in SLE,<sup>58</sup> and immune deposits have been demonstrated mainly in the alveolar interstitium and vessel walls, primarily IgG1, IgM, IgA, and C3.<sup>54,58,61-64</sup>

## **SYSTEMIC SCLEROSIS AND THE CREST SYNDROME**

Clinical evidence of pulmonary disease in systemic sclerosis (*i.e.*, scleroderma) and the CREST (*i.e.*, calcinosis, Raynaud phenomenon, esophageal dysmotility, sclerodactyly, telangiectasia) syndrome variant is common and had been known since the time of



**FIGURE 67-5.** Bronchiolitis obliterans in systemic lupus erythematosus with total occlusion of lumen. (H & E stain; low magnification.)

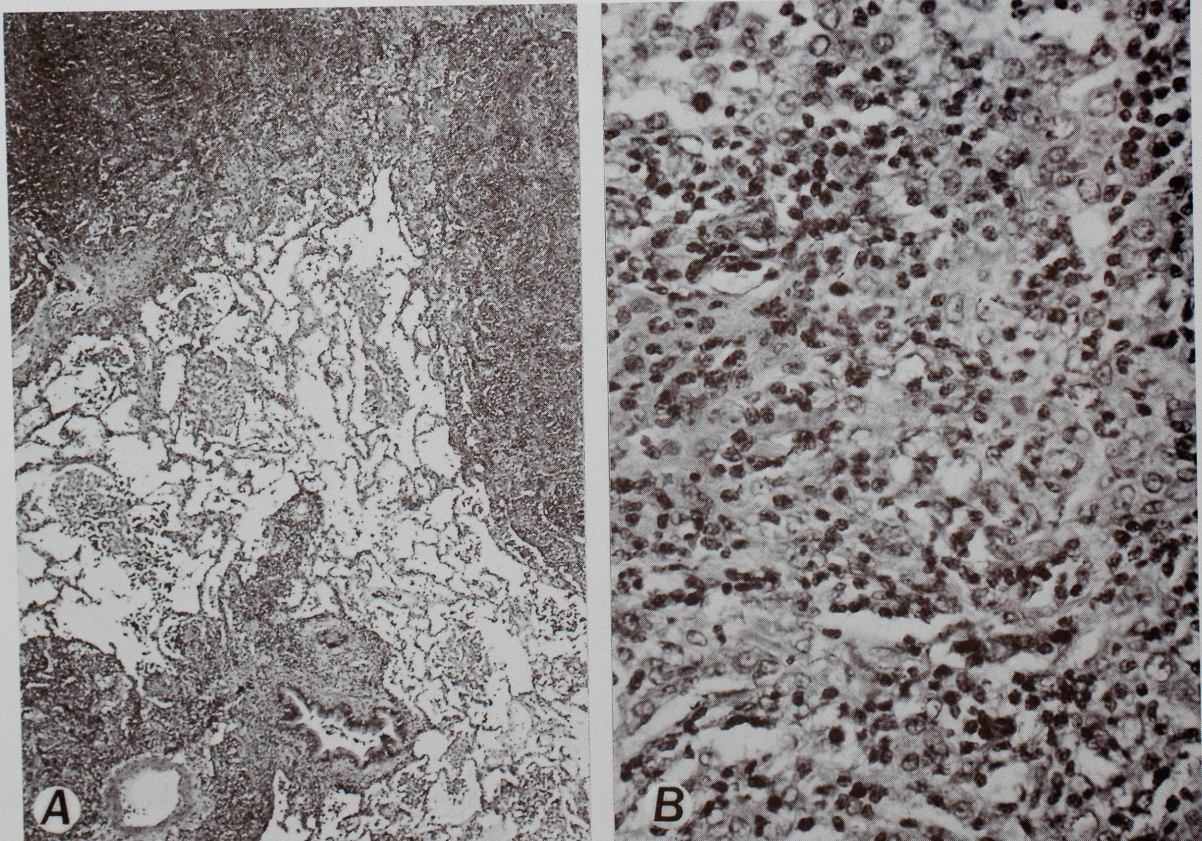
Hippocrates.<sup>65</sup> Abnormal findings in the lungs of scleroderma and CREST patients at autopsy are almost universal.<sup>66-75</sup>

Systemic sclerosis patients with pulmonary involvement have significantly poorer survival prospects. The results of a multicenter cooperative follow-up study of 264 patients showed that patients with scleroderma lung disease survived a median of  $28 \pm 17$  months, and 60 of 104 (58%) died before the last follow-up at an average of 5.2 years.<sup>76</sup> The major pulmonary complications of systemic sclerosis and the CREST syndrome are interstitial pulmonary fibrosis and pulmonary hypertension.<sup>71-75</sup>

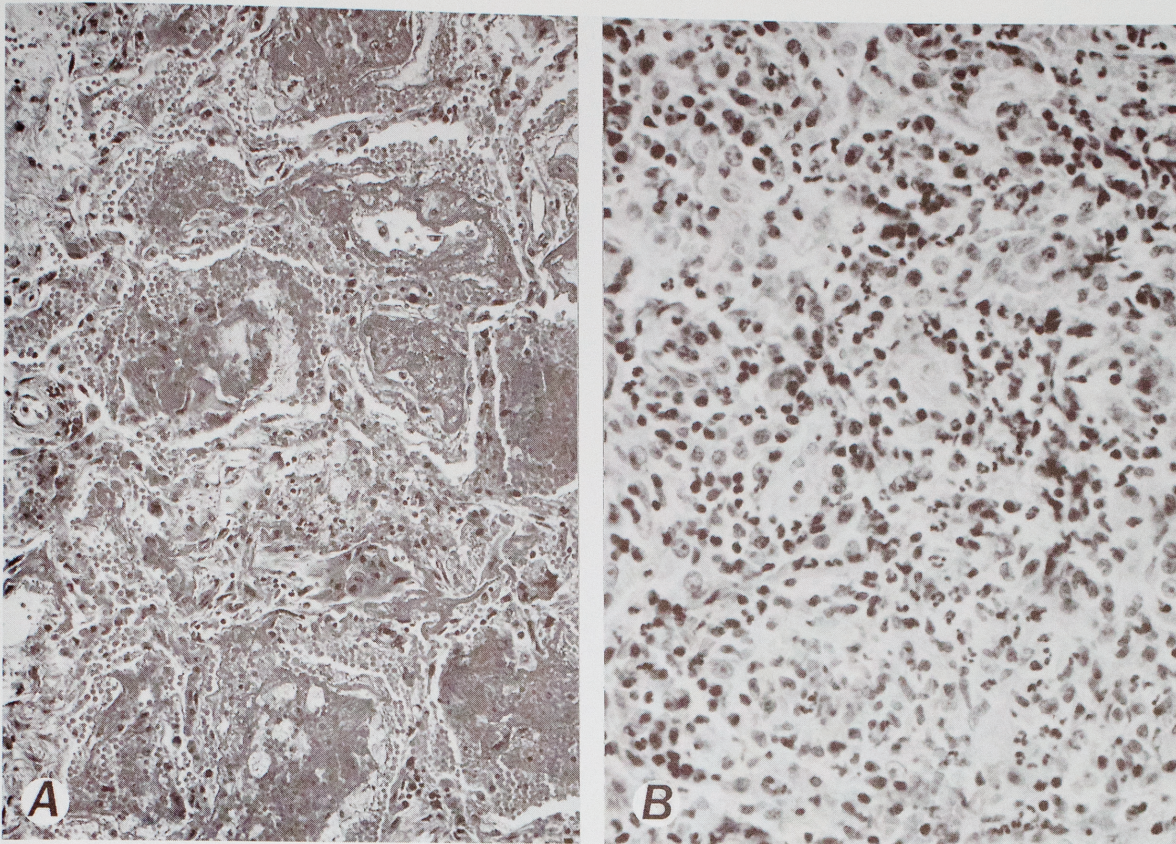
Histologic evaluation of scleroderma lung disease has been based mainly on the results of autopsy studies,<sup>66-70</sup> which emphasize the end-stage fibrosis associated with bronchiectasis and subpleural honeycombing (Fig. 67-10). The earlier phase of interstitial lung disease in systemic sclerosis, as seen in open lung biopsies, is indistinguishable from idiopathic UIP. However, the interstitial fibrosis in scleroderma tends to be indolent and more slowly progressive than UIP, with the rare exception of a rapidly progressive diffuse alveolar damage and bronchiolitis obliterans type of lung injury (Fig. 67-11) also occurring (see Chap. 31).<sup>77</sup>

### *Pulmonary Hypertension*

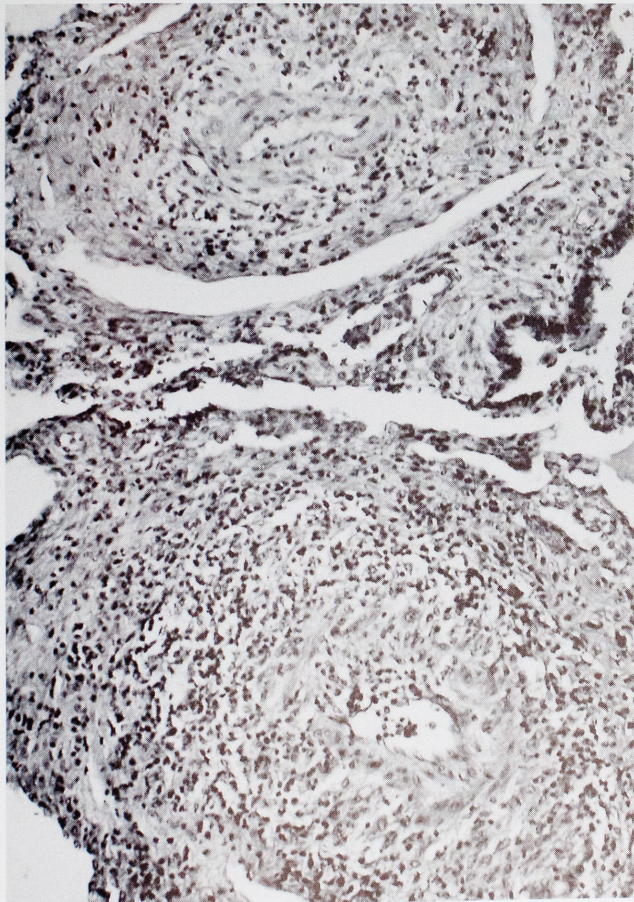
Pulmonary hypertension occurs in 10% to 35% of patients with systemic sclerosis and in 40% to 65% of patients with the CREST syndrome variant.<sup>69,71,73</sup> In CREST patients, the pulmonary hypertension is often not associated with interstitial fibrosis.<sup>72</sup> The vascular changes in both scleroderma and CREST lungs show the same characteristic histologic features of marked, concentric intimal fibrosis and minimal medial hypertrophy (Fig. 67-12). Plexi-



**FIGURE 67-6.** (A) Lymphocytic interstitial pneumonitis with pseudolymphoma in systemic lupus erythematosus. (H & E stain; low magnification.) (B) Close-up view of benign lymphoid cells admixed with larger macrophages in pseudolymphoma. (H & E stain; intermediate magnification.)



**FIGURE 67-7.** (A) Pulmonary capillaritis and diffuse alveolar hemorrhage in systemic lupus erythematosus. (H & E stain; low magnification.) (B) Close-up view of pulmonary capillaritis. (H & E stain; intermediate magnification.)



**FIGURE 67-8.** Pulmonary vasculitis in systemic lupus erythematosus. The lumens of these two arterial vessels are markedly reduced by a rich lymphoid infiltrate with fibrosis. (H & E stain; low magnification.)

form arteriopathy of pulmonary hypertension (Fig. 67-13) in systemic sclerosis and the CREST syndrome occurs only occasionally.<sup>70-74</sup>

### **DERMATOMYOSITIS AND POLYMYOSITIS**

Dermatomyositis and polymyositis (DPM) are usually regarded as clinical subgroups of the same inflammatory myopathy of unknown etiology.<sup>78</sup> DPM is a relatively uncommon disease with an incidence of 5 in 1,000,000 in the United States.<sup>79,80</sup> The disease affects principally the limb girdles, neck, and pharynx and is associated with a skin rash in about 40% of patients.<sup>78</sup> It occurs about twice as frequently in women of all age groups, with peaks in the first and fifth decades of life.<sup>79</sup>

Pulmonary involvement in DPM was first described by Mills and Matthews as recently as 1956,<sup>81</sup> and the reported prevalence rate varies from 0<sup>82</sup> to 64%<sup>83</sup> but is most probably in the 5% to 10% range.<sup>84,85</sup> Three types of pulmonary involvement in DPM were described by earlier investigators: UIP, ventilatory insufficiency due to respiratory muscle weakness, and aspiration pneumonia.<sup>86,87</sup> More recent studies<sup>88-90</sup> emphasize the occurrence of diffuse alveolar damage, fibrosis alveolitis, and bronchiolitis obliterans organizing pneumonia (Fig. 67-14), and, rarely, pulmonary vasculitis and pulmonary hypertension (Fig. 67-15).

The prognosis of DPM patients with pulmonary involvement is generally unfavorable; the case fatality rate for patients with histologically proven interstitial lung disease and inflammatory myopathy is 62% over a 2-year period.<sup>91,92</sup> Clinically, the appear-

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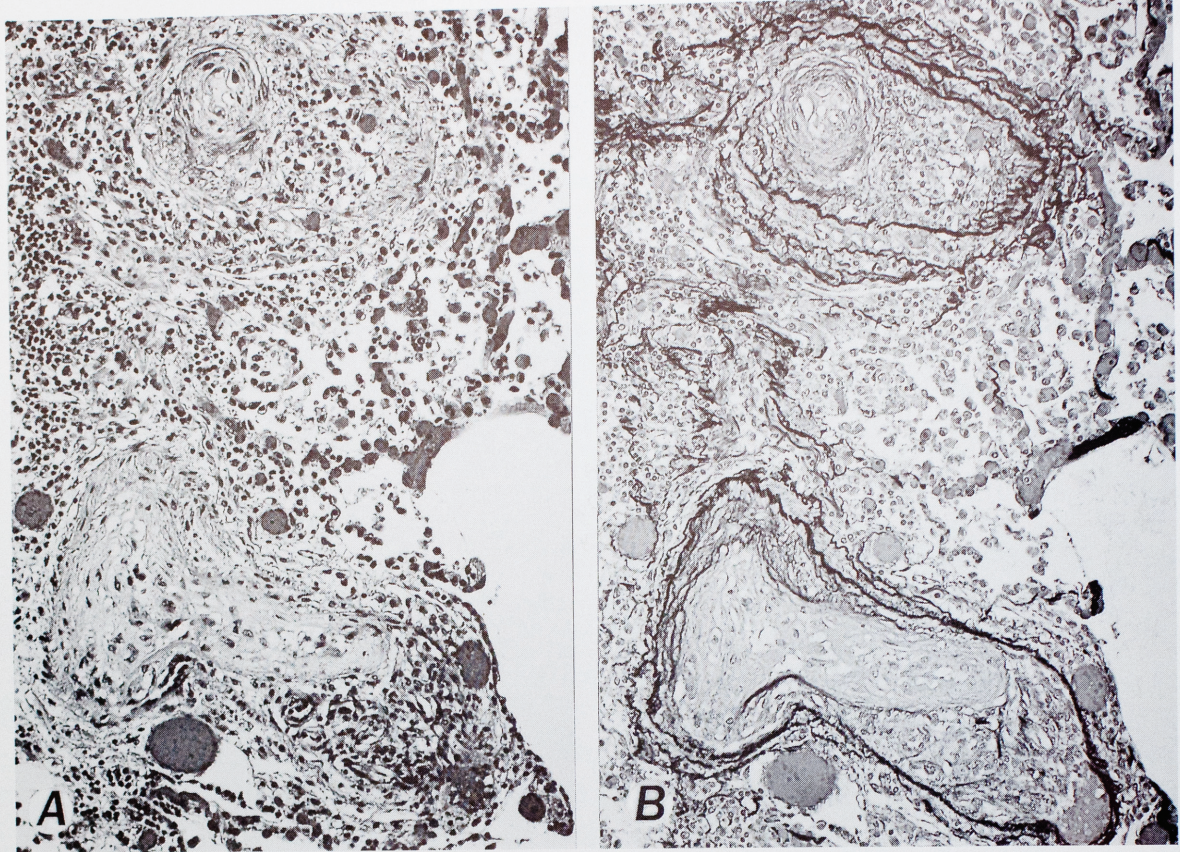


FIGURE 67-9. (A and B) Plexogenic pulmonary arteriopathy in systemic lupus erythematosus. (A: H & E stain; low magnification; B: elastic stain; low magnification.)

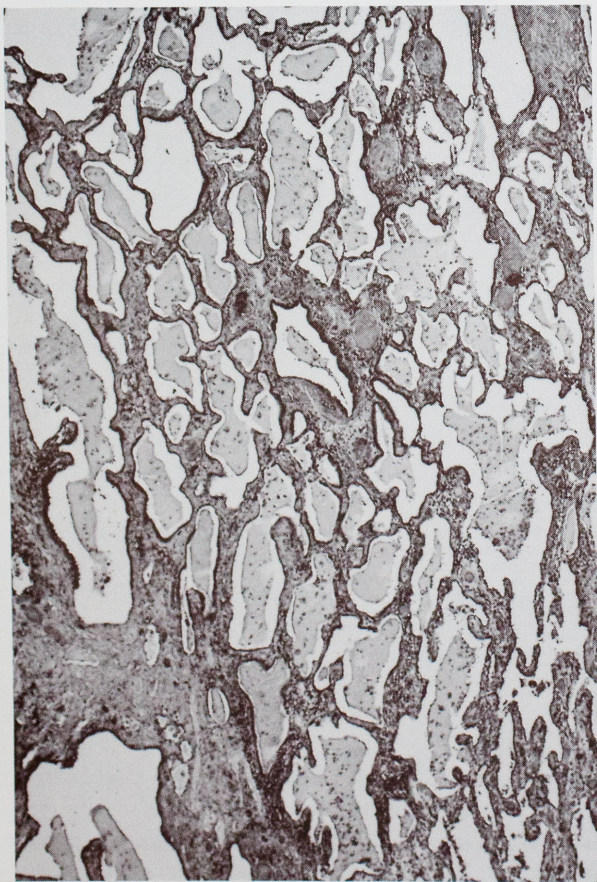


FIGURE 67-10. Usual interstitial fibrosis with honeycombing in the lung of a patient with systemic sclerosis. (H & E stain; low magnification.)

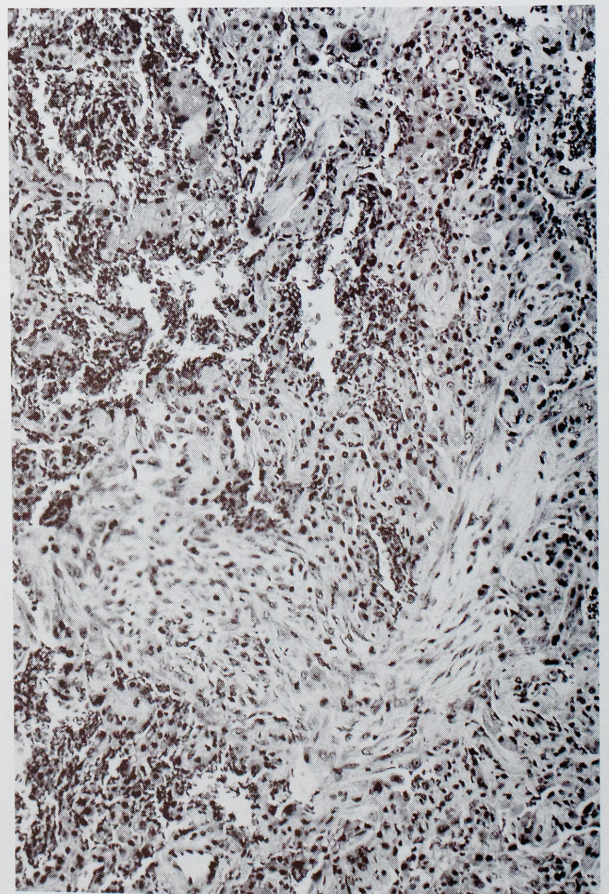
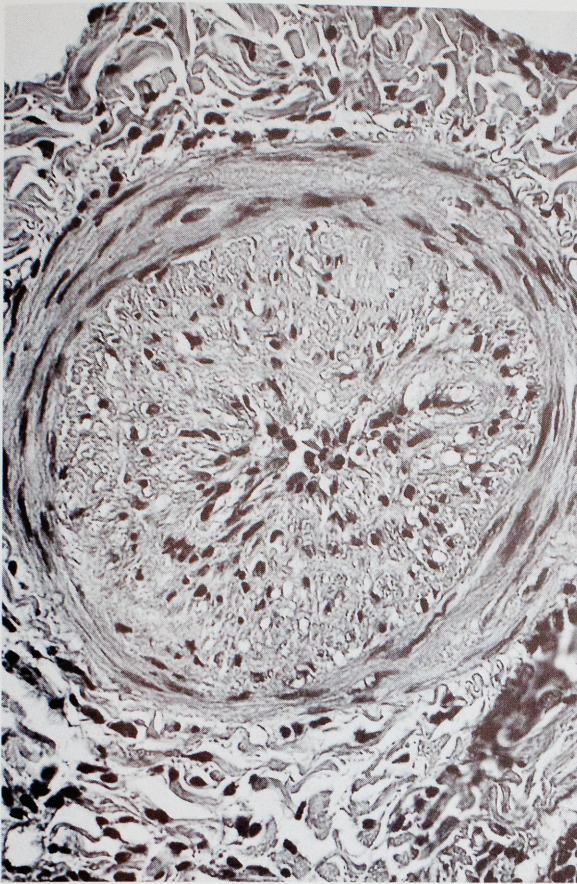
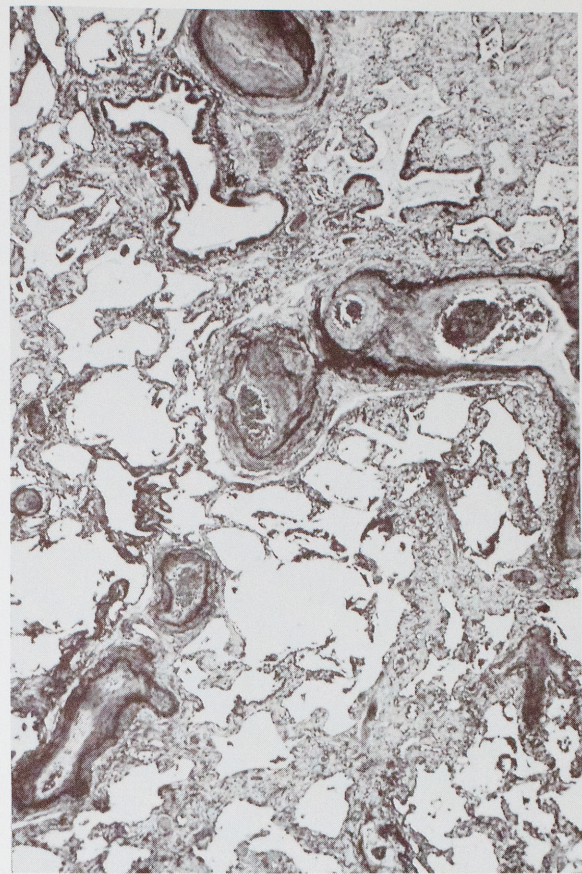


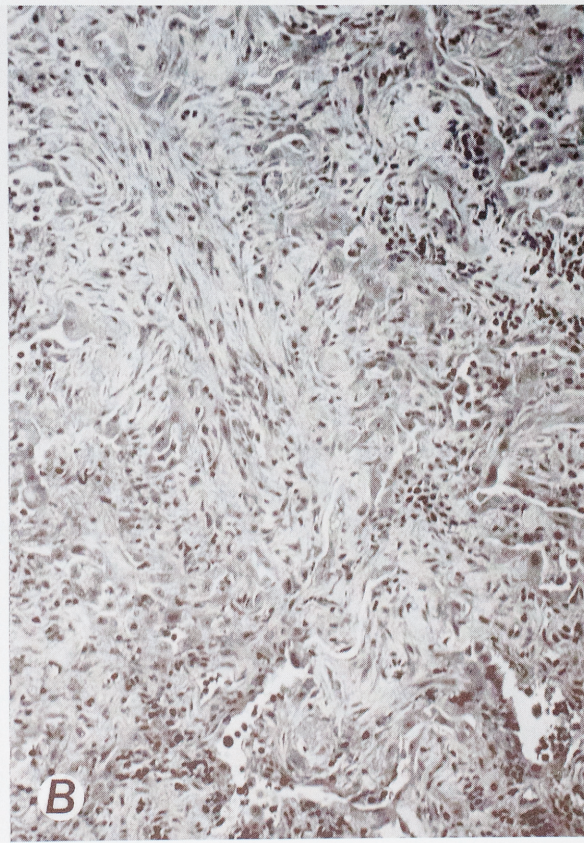
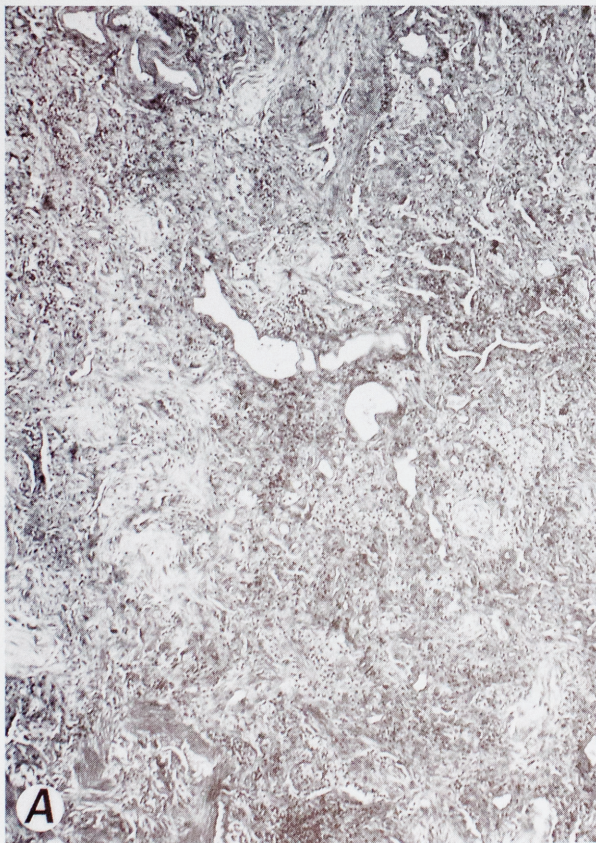
FIGURE 67-11. Bronchiolitis obliterans organizing pneumonia in a patient with systemic sclerosis. (H & E stain; low magnification.)



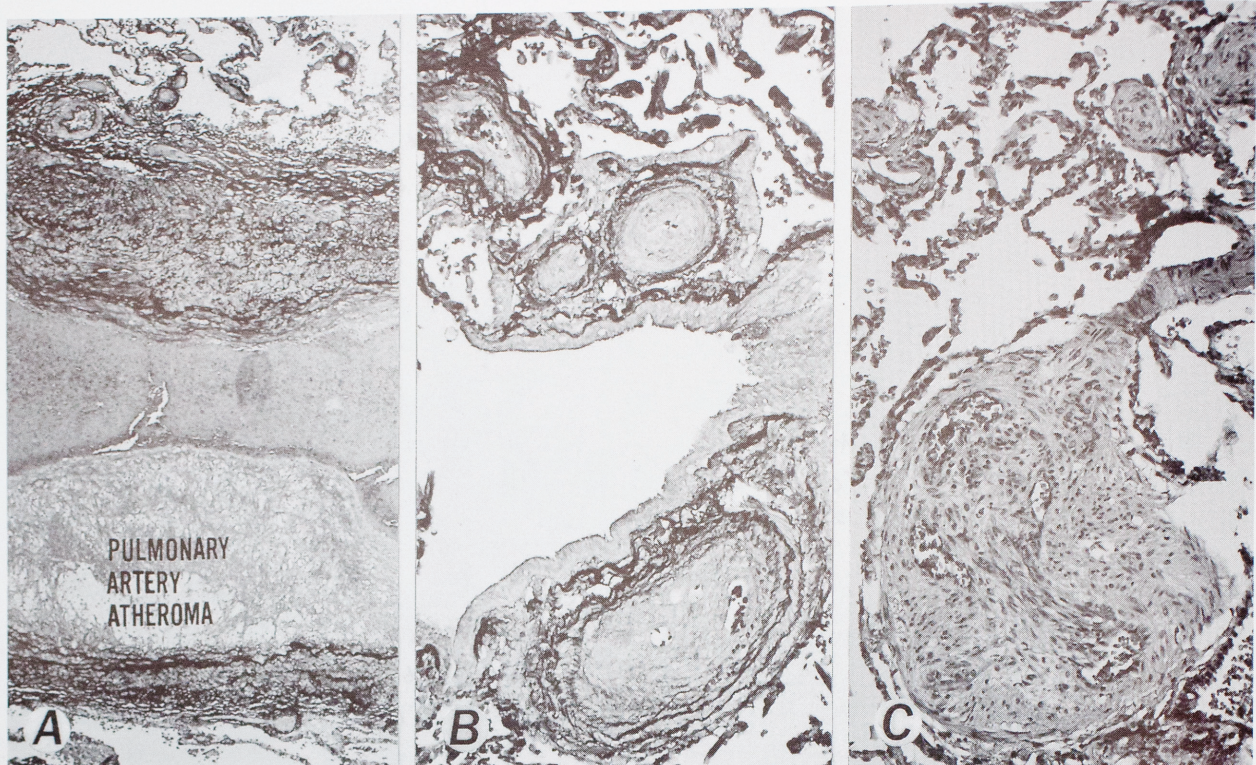
**FIGURE 67-12.** Proliferative intimal fibrosis with luminal occlusion and medial hypertrophy in the lung of a patient with systemic sclerosis. (H & E stain; intermediate magnification.)



**FIGURE 67-13.** Hypertensive pulmonary vascular disease in a patient with systemic sclerosis. (Elastic tissue stain; low magnification.)



**FIGURE 67-14.** (A) Organizing diffuse alveolar damage and bronchiolitis obliterans in a patient with dermatomyositis lung disease. (H & E stain; low magnification.) (B) Close-up view of bronchiolitis obliterans. (H & E stain; low magnification.)



**FIGURE 67-15.** Pulmonary hypertension in a patient with dermatopolymyositis lung disease. (A) Atheroma of a lobar pulmonary artery. (Elastic tissue stain; low magnification.) (B) Occlusive intimal fibrosis of small pulmonary arteries. (Elastic tissue stain; low magnification.) (C) Plexogenic arteriopathy. (H & E stain; low magnification.)

ance of interstitial lung disease may precede evidence of inflammatory myopathy in about one third of DPM patients, and patients with diffuse alveolar damage or pulmonary vascular disease have a uniformly poor prognosis.<sup>88-90</sup>

## ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS

Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is an autoimmune disorder of the axial skeleton associated with the HLA-B27 antigen in about 90% of affected patients.<sup>93</sup> The first description of pulmonary involvement in AS was by Dunham and Kautz in 1941.<sup>94</sup> Pleuropulmonary manifestations of AS are uncommon and usually appear late in the disease; in a review of 2080 AS patients, Rosenow and colleagues identified only 28 (1.3%) who had evidence of lung disease.<sup>95</sup> The intrathoracic manifestations of AS are principally of two types: upper lobe fibrobullous disease with infection and chest wall restriction. Less frequently, organizing pneumonia, lymphocytic interstitial pneumonitis, and septal fibrosis have also been observed.<sup>96</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Pleuropulmonary involvement is often an important cause of morbidity and mortality in all major types of collagen-vascular disease. Histologic evidence of the disease in open lung biopsy specimens, or at autopsy, is required for the definitive diagnosis of pulmonary involvement. For each of the major collagen-vascular diseases, certain prognostically significant types of pathologic changes in the lungs tend to overshadow others. In RA, it is interstitial

fibrosis; in SLE, it is pleuritis, pulmonary capillaritis, and alveolar hemorrhage; in systemic sclerosis and the CREST variant, it is pulmonary hypertension; in DPM, it is diffuse alveolar damage and bronchiolitis obliterans; and in AS, it is upper lobe fibrobullous disease with infection. Nevertheless, overlaps in the histopathologic features of pulmonary involvement among these major collagen-vascular diseases are common. Close consultations between the clinician, radiologist, and pathologist are essential for the correct interpretation and diagnosis of pulmonary involvement in collagen-vascular diseases.

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