Abstract:
Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) are associated with increased mortality, largely as a consequence of cardiovascular (CV) disease. Studies found relative risk ratios of 2 for myocardial infarction in RA and up to 7 for myocardial infarction in SLE patients. Beyond the traditional CV risk factors, chronic systemic inflammation has been shown to be a crucial factor in atherosclerosis development and progression from endothelial dysfunction to plaque rupture and thrombosis. Numerous studies have shown that atherosclerosis is not a passive process characterized by accumulation of lipids in the vessel walls, but rather represents active inflammation of the vasculature. Inflammatory cells such as macrophages, monocytes and T cells play an important role in the development of both RA and atherosclerosis. According to the recently published EULAR recommendations for CV risk screening and management in patients with inflammatory arthritis, annual CV risk assessment is recommended for all patients with RA. Any CV risk factors identified should be optimally managed. In addition to appropriate CV risk management, aggressive suppression of the inflammatory process is recommended to further lower CV risk.