
News from the Quebec Rheumatology Association

By Gaëlle Chédeville, MD

As of July 1st, 2013, 110 rheumatologists are members of the Quebec Rheumatology Association (QRA). This demonstrates a very nice growth curve over the years. Not so long ago, our association was one of the smallest of the specialist associations in Quebec. The growth in the QRA will certainly significantly improve our ability to offer services to the population in all areas of Quebec. Currently, there are still a few areas that are unfortunately underserved, but we are working hard to correct this.

To attract new members, our association is very dynamic regarding educational activities, targeting medical residents before they choose their specialty. Under the lead of Dr. Marie Hudson, this program was rejuvenated two years ago. For one weekend every year, first- and second-year internal medicine residents are welcomed and taught rheumatology through different workshops, depending on their level of training. For the first time this year, a pediatric resident also benefited from this program. Many residents attend both years, and some of them will go on to choose rheumatology as their specialty.

The educational outreach component of our association's work is also directed towards family physicians, through our yearly publication *Le Rhumatologue*. Each issue is focused on a specific topic; the next issue is an update on osteoporosis which will be published by the end of 2013. Every family physician in Quebec receives this publication. The feedback has always been very positive and encourages us to continue. One year, we also reached pediatricians with a publication on juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA).

Member education is conducted through our annual meeting and a separate meeting called "Update in Rheumatology". The plan for next year is to host both meetings concurrently, to facilitate attendance and to offer even better-quality teaching. These meetings have a slightly different focus, with a more practical aspect and case discussions during the annual meeting, and a review or discussion of hot topics during the Update. The spirit of each meeting will be preserved, to the great advantage of the rheumatologists.

In our community, the use of musculoskeletal (MSK) ultrasound has been developing very quickly. Under the leadership of Dr. Alessandra Bruns, interest has grown significantly. Almost every resident-in-training in Quebec takes courses through the Canadian Rheumatology

Ultrasound Society (CRUS) to learn the basics of the techniques of ultrasound and to become comfortable in using with patients. Many young rheumatologists have passed through Dr. Bruns's hands to acquire more expertise in the domain. Very soon, every rheumatologist will incorporate MSK ultrasound in their practice as a standard of care. We are not far from implementing MSK ultrasound as mandatory in our training programs.

We are very proud that our association has a website (www.rhumatologie.org/rhumatologie.html), implemented a few years ago by Dr. Sai-Yan Yuen. Its aim is to facilitate communication between our members and provide updates on events in our specialty, but also to link to the latest guidelines, lectures, and other useful information for practice. A forum is also accessible to discuss challenging cases. The website also provides public access to *Le Rhumatologue*, which is quite popular. Links are in place to access further information on diseases and medications. There is also a directory to find a rheumatologist by area, which can be very useful for patients or physicians seeking to refer patients.

Lastly, regarding the economic aspect, negotiations with the Quebec government and the "Fédération des médecins spécialistes du Québec", which represents all specialist associations including ours, have taken place. Over the past two years, our members have seen a significant increase in their income due to an increase in the fees for medical acts. This was obtained by the endless work and discussions of Dr. Denis Choquette, our President, and Dr. Frédéric Morin, Vice-President. Different strategies have made this increase possible, including creating new codes that recognize the complexity of care of some of our patients, including the pediatric population, elderly patients, and those with inflammatory rheumatic diseases. Other projects are still under discussion to improve access to care.

Overall, the QRA is doing very well and we hope to continue on the same path for many years to come.

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