

time, once all of our CRA and CRAJ meetings were completed. One particular highlight was the opening lecture presented by Dr. Craig Venter, the geneticist who won the race to sequence the human genome. He is a fascinating character, and I highly suggest reading his autobiography, *A Life Decoded: My Genome: My Life*. Another interesting session modelled on the CRA was The Great Debate: Biologics or Triple Therapy for the Treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis? with Dr. James O'Dell and Dr. Ron van Vollenhoven as combatants. I think I know whom Dr. Vandana Ahluwalia and Dr. Keystone, the Canadian co-authors of the RACAT study on this topic recently published in the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*,¹ were cheering for.

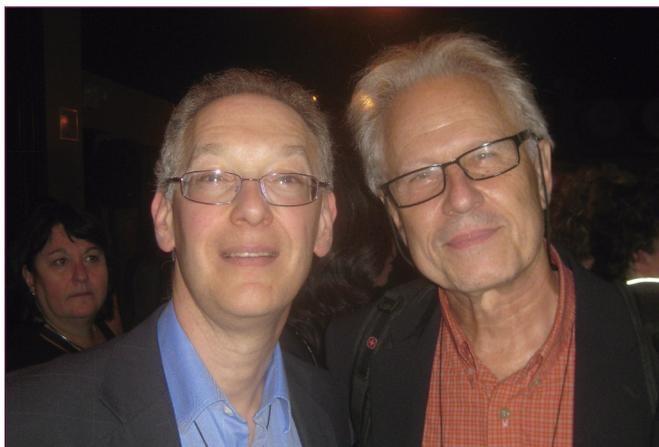
The host city provided great weather and many sites to see, including the famous San Diego Zoo, the USS Midway, Balboa Park, the Embarcadero, and a heritage Old Town district. Excellent food, from Mexican to BBQ and everything in between, was also readily accessible. No fog this time, though Air Canada advanced our return flight home by five hours, forcing me to miss the last morning of the meeting (I forgive them as they did upgrade me to business class three times in the last two months, twice gratis).

I look forward to seeing many of you at ACR 2014 in Boston.

Reference

1. O'Dell JR, Mikuls TR, Taylor TH, et al. Therapies for Active Rheumatoid Arthritis after Methotrexate Failure. *N Engl J Med* 2013; 369(4):307-18.

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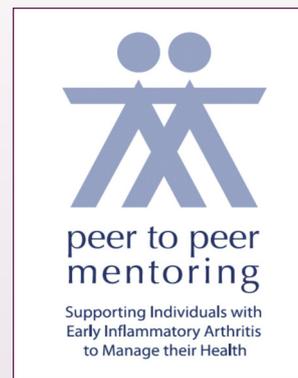


Reunited in 2013: Dr. Baer and Dr. Schulz.

Don't Go It Alone!

Arthritis Cross-disciplinary Research Leads to Development of a Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program

Dr. Mary Bell, from Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, investigated the impact of a peer support program on people living with early inflammatory arthritis (EIA). Her unique research team included two patients, also known as "consumers": Dawn Richards, PhD, from the Canadian Arthritis Network's Consumer Advisory Council, and Jennifer Boyle, PhD. The intervention model they developed resulted in improvements for mentees in overall impact of arthritis on life, coping efficacy, and social support.



A subsequent pilot randomized control trial (RCT), supported with a grant from the Canadian Initiative for Outcomes in Rheumatology Care (CIORA), showed that early peer support improved perceived social support but had little effect on other outcomes.

However, Dr. Bell and Dr. Jennifer Stinson at the Hospital for Sick Children have recently been awarded a Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) grant to develop an online version of peer-to-peer mentoring for adolescents and the research team is now seeking funding to do a larger RCT. Research thus far has been made possible in part through funding from the Canadian Arthritis Network (CAN) and the CIHR.

For more information about the research, contact Mary Bell at mary.bell@sunnybrook.ca.