

## Therapeutics Committee Update

By Mary-Ann Fitzcharles, MD, FRCPC

This has been a particularly productive year for the CRA Therapeutics Committee. We are delighted that our membership has reached the nice round figure of 15, with representation from rheumatologists in both academia and the community, rheumatologists from across the country, and also members spanning the ages from the young, bright and enthusiastic to the more seasoned and, dare I say, grey-haired. In line with the stellar leadership of CRA CEO Ahmad Zbib, we have clearly defined standard operating procedures for reporting of conflicts of interest by committee members, response to drug shortages, development of position statements, and standards for a CRA member representing the CRA at a national/international forum, committee or advisory panel.

We have continued to alert membership to drug shortages, which this year have included most importantly myochrysin and prednisolone. We responded to a Health Canada review on immune globulin (IVIG) product supply by emphasizing the importance of this agent in the treatment of Kawasaki Disease, as well as the emerging use of IVIG in patients with childhood dermatomyositis, systemic onset juvenile polyarthritis that is poorly responsive to conventional treatments, and treatment-resistant vasculitis.

Our most important activity this year was to develop a position statement for medical cannabis use in the rheumatic diseases, as well as an update of the previous position statement for biosimilars. We are particularly excited that the medical cannabis position statement is now in press at the *Journal of Rheumatology*. The CRA is the first rheumatology association worldwide to come forward in this regard, and also to provide real-life pragmatic direction for rheumatologists and patients alike. We will be looking carefully at stem cell transplantation, which is currently being suggested as a treatment for many of our patients with osteoarthritis and even soft tissue rheumatism, and we will provide a position statement in this regard in early 2019. Finally, we have developed a succession plan, to ensure that our committee remains vigorous and vibrant. Therefore, I would like to warmly welcome Rosie Scuccimarrì as the vice-chair of the Therapeutics Committee.

*Mary-Ann Fitzcharles, MD, FRCPC  
Associate Professor of Medicine,  
McGill University Health Centre  
Montreal, Quebec*

### Summary: The First Annual Cardio-Rheumatology Scientific Day at Women's College Hospital

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Overall, the event brought together healthcare providers of different disciplines to shed light on an area that is not well known in rheumatology. To reduce the burden of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality, more research is needed in the area to inform development of disease-specific guidelines. Since rheumatic patients are also likely to have other co-morbidities, collaboration among family physicians, specialists and allied health professionals is needed to reduce cardiovascular risk. Looking to the future, early intervention and prevention of heart disease will require the development of disease-specific models that accurately stratify patients according to their risk of developing cardiovascular events.

*Keith Colaco, PhD Candidate,  
Institute of Medical Science,  
University of Toronto  
Toronto, Ontario*

*Shadi Akhtari, MD, FRCPC  
Division of Cardiology,  
Women's College Hospital,  
Toronto, Ontario*

*Paula Harvey, MBBS, PhD  
Division of Cardiology,  
Women's College Hospital,  
University of Toronto,  
Toronto, Ontario*

*Lihì Eder, MD, PhD  
Division of Rheumatology  
Women's College Hospital,  
University of Toronto,  
Toronto, Ontario*