

Update from the Therapeutics Committee

By Rosie Scuccimarri, MD, FRCPC

The pandemic has continued to dominate the agenda of the CRA Therapeutics Committee, and we have been busy developing guidance for members on urgent and emerging issues related to COVID-19. Some of the highlights over the past year include:

- CRA Position Statement on the Safety of Hydroxychloroquine in the Treatment of Rheumatic Diseases, published January 27th, 2021.
- CRA Position Statement on COVID-19 Vaccination — updated April 16th to include the AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson vaccines, as well as advocate for prioritization and expedited second dose for patients with rheumatic disease; updated May 20th to include the use of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for 12–15-year-olds; and updated September 27th to include addition of Moderna vaccine to recommendations for individuals between 12 and 18 years old, and to advocate for a third dose in immunosuppressed patients.
- Contribution to the updated Decision Tool for COVID-19 Vaccination and participation on the CRA COVID-19 Vaccination Guidelines panel.
- Letter sent on April 21st to the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) advocating for prioritization of the COVID-19 vaccine and expedited second dose for patients with rheumatic disease.
- Communication sent to CRA members October 18th regarding Actemra IV shortage due to global supply chain challenges as well as COVID-19 use, and recommendation to switch patients to subcutaneous where possible.

Monitoring for drug shortages and advocating for CRA members and their patients are always our top priority. To that end, we plan to develop a provincial framework in 2022 to aid with communication and dissemination of drug access issues. And, as always, we'll continue to respond to emerging issues on behalf of our members through position statements.

This work is only possible through the dedication of our volunteer committee members. Over the last two years, there have been many demands on them. They have been highly committed and have always impressed with their quick response and expert guidance. In addition, we have recently welcomed Dr. Alison Kydd as Vice Chair and we appreciate the initiative and leadership she demonstrates in this new role. A heartfelt thanks to the committee members and to Sue Ranta for the tremendous support that she provides to this committee.

*Rosie Scuccimarri, MD, FRCPC
Chair, CRA Therapeutics Committee
Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics,
McGill University
Pediatric Rheumatologist,
Montreal Children's Hospital
Montreal, Quebec*