



## News from Newfoundland & Labrador

By Dr. Sean Hamilton

We are in the dead of winter like most of Canada, epitomized by my snowy naturally carved backyard donut. Our Rheumatology Health Unit (RHU) presses on, frequently adjusting to the whims of COVID-19 and more recently to a straight-on cyberattack at our institution.

When I gave my last commentary from Newfoundland in November 2019, little did I or anyone else know what was coming. First, we had Snowmageddon in St. John's in January 2020 which at the time was one of our worst snowstorms ever – over a hundred centimetres



of snow necessitating calling in the Army. Looking back, Snowmageddon was just a snowflake on a shovel compared to the goings on of COVID-19.

The pandemic has interfered with patient care, mainly by prolonging waiting times and necessitating virtual visits. I've come to realize the telephone call – an invention from the 1800's – as unsatisfactory as it is, is still the most practical method of the virtual visit, as video visits, which “sound” great on paper, are impractical given logistics and the volume of patients needing to be assessed.

I shall digress no more.

Our RHU here at Eastern Health covers the entire province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have three rheumatologists, along with our physiotherapist, occupational therapist, two rheumatology nurse practitioners, a clinical pharmacist, our research staff and our very helpful office and secretarial staff. We operate a Central Rheumatology Triage with a Standardized Referral Form, which has proven to be a very successful addition. Unfortunately, our waiting list remains too long. Fortunately, we do have two full-time private practice rheumatologists in St. John's, highlighted on this page.



Snowmageddon 2020

Our own Dr. Proton Rahman has played a major role as the person in charge of modelling for the province in the battle against COVID-19. His time-consuming work in this role has been indispensable in allowing Newfoundland and Labrador to achieve as good a response to the pandemic as you would find anywhere. Dr. Rahman is to be thanked and congratulated for his efforts.

Before closing, our RHU is recruiting for one and hopefully two rheumatologists. It's unlikely I'll be around for the next CRAJ Newfoundland update as retirement beckons. As we go through the regular recruitment channels, I very humbly put a plug in for recruitment here at Eastern Health/Memorial University. I can honestly say Newfoundland has been a great place for me to practice rheumatology over the past 35 years. It has had its challenges like every other place in this wide, wide world, but its positives have far outweighed its negatives.

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## By Dr. Natalia Pittman and Dr. Shaina Goudie

Dr. Natalia Pittman and Dr. Shaina Goudie are currently practicing together in St. John's in a community-based adult rheumatology clinic. Dr. Pittman has a special interest in rheumatic diseases in pregnancy, and Dr. Goudie is doing a regular combination dermatology-rheumatology clinic. They take part in undergraduate and postgraduate medical education. Outside of work, both are mothers to two active children. Dr. Pittman is involved with competitive synchronized skating, and Dr. Goudie keeps busy at the cabin.



Dr. Goudie (right) and Dr. Pittman (left)

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