

News from the ORA

By Deborah Levy, MD, MS, FRCPC

Greetings from the Ontario Rheumatology Association (ORA)! I am pleased to report that we remain an active and engaged organization, with multiple successes over the past year. As a pediatric rheumatologist, I appreciate that every family member has a role in the health of the (affected) child. Likewise, engagement of the entire ORA family, including the Executive, Board of Directors, Committee Chairs and all ORA members, fuels the success of our initiatives and events. Together we are committed to improving rheumatology care across Ontario as well as nationally through our important partnerships.

A few highlights:

The Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) at the Kingbridge Centre just north of Toronto in May 2024 was a great success, with the highest attendance on record. We held a well-received Resident's Day and Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) event, followed by our state-of-the-art meeting featuring international speakers including Dr. Désirée van der Heijde, Dr. Robert Landewé and Dr. Jeff Sparks, alongside Dr. Janet Pope and several "local", yet internationally renowned rheumatologists. We are already looking forward to the 2025 ASM scheduled for May 23-25. This is open to all rheumatologists, so please mark your calendars. Details will be available in the new year.

The Informatics Committee, chaired by Dr. Tom Appleton, continues to make exciting progress. RheumView™, the ORA's digital health solution, has launched and many Ontario rheumatologists are onboarded and using this intuitive interface every day in their offices. RheumView™ is fully designed, developed, owned, and supported by the ORA. Early adopters have been impressed by the ease of use, allowing both improved efficiency for individual patient care, and the ability to visualize their performance on important quality indicators in their practice and compare it to the wider provincial cohort. Ongoing development will allow wider implementation in community-based rheumatology practices, in addition to integrations across different platforms.

We continue to build relationships with the Ontario Ministry of Health and with private payers. Dr. Jane Purvis and the Government Affairs Committee have frequent communications with the government and our members regarding issues such as the biosimilar transition, public funding of specialized laboratory testing (e.g. anti-CCP, ANCA, myositis antibodies), unifying reimbursement criteria, and ensuring that we minimize the administrative burden of fulfilling complex criteria for recently funded biologics.

The Northern Ontario Committee, chaired by Dr. Sahil Koppikar, Chandra Farrer and new co-chair Dr. Ka-



Rheumatologists, ACPACs, and ASC representatives at the Northern Ontario Committee meeting in Thunder Bay in October 2024.

mran Shaikh, has seen the completion of training of two (of several planned) Advanced Clinician Practitioners in Arthritis Care (ACPACs). A recent successful meeting of rheumatology, ACPAC and Arthritis Society of Canada participants took place in Thunder Bay. This was an opportunity to develop a plan for further expansion of the pediatric and adult rheumatology models of care in this large, underserved area. Ongoing work with the Ontario government has provided support for the necessary training and implementation of the model in Thunder Bay and other regional hubs in northern Ontario.

The Early Rheumatologists of Ontario (ERO) committee continues to host innovative virtual workshops and interactive sessions for all ORA members. Turnout has been impressive at sessions covering important topics such as Financial Wellness, Parental Leave, Employment Law 101, and Productivity and Efficiency. The committee is already planning new and timely offerings for 2025.

I certainly can't write a summary without mentioning the Pediatric Committee, a new and active group that has taken on a province-wide collaborative project. Together, the four academic pediatric rheumatology centers (London, Hamilton, Toronto, and Ottawa) will merge data to characterize current access to care measures in Ontario. They will identify several quality indicators including timely assessment by a pediatric rheumatologist.

These are just a sampling of our new and ongoing initiatives. Importantly, all of these events and projects would not be possible without the countless volunteer hours of our dedicated leadership team and ORA members. I am also incredibly grateful for our fantastic Executive Director Sandy Kennedy for her dedication to ensuring our ongoing success.

All the best for the coming year!

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