Building a Stronger Voice for Community Rheumatologists

As part of the Canadian Rheumatology Association's (CRA) 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, the association is strengthening its understanding of the needs and priorities of community-based rheumatologists across Canada.

One of the key initiatives supporting this work is the newly established **Community Practice Committee (CPC)**, a committee dedicated to ensuring the perspectives of community rheumatologists are reflected throughout the CRA's programs, services, and strategic priorities.

The CPC was created in response to feedback gathered during the strategic planning process. While the CRA has a long history of supporting members through education, networking, and professional development, many community rheumatologists identified opportunities for the CRA to better understand and support the realities of community practice. Increasing clinical demands, administrative pressures, and limited non-clinical time can create challenges that differ from those experienced in academic settings.

The committee's mandate is to identify evolving needs within community practice, explore practical solutions, strengthen engagement, and help integrate community perspectives across the CRA. The CPC will also collaborate with other committees and initiatives to help shape programs and resources that support practice sustainability, professional connection, and member value.

The CRA is pleased to announce that Dr. Fergus To has been appointed as the inaugural Chair of the Community Practice Committee.

Based in Vancouver, Dr. To is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Division of Rheumatology at the University of British Columbia and maintains an independent rheumatology practice alongside his hospital-based roles. His experience working across both community and academic environments provides a valuable perspective on the opportunities and challenges facing rheumatologists in a variety of practice settings.

"I am excited to help lead this important initiative and contribute to the CRA's efforts to better support rheumatologists running an independent practice," says Dr. To.

Following the call for expressions of interest, all CRA members who applied to participate in the CPC have been invited to join, reflecting the strong interest and enthusiasm from community rheumatologists across the country.

The committee will begin its work this fall, and the CRA will continue to provide updates on the CPC's progress, priorities, and recommendations as it works to strengthen support for community-based rheumatologists and ensure their voices are represented across the Association.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the CRA at *info@rheum.ca*.

CRA Planetary Health Task Force Concludes Two Years of Impact

When Dr. Stephanie Tom (current president of the Canadian Rheumatology Association) brought her passion for planetary health to the CRA in 2023, it sparked a conversation that grew into a national initiative. With Board support, the CRA launched the Planetary Health Task Force in 2024 to explore how environmental sustainability and high-quality patient care intersect within rheumatology.

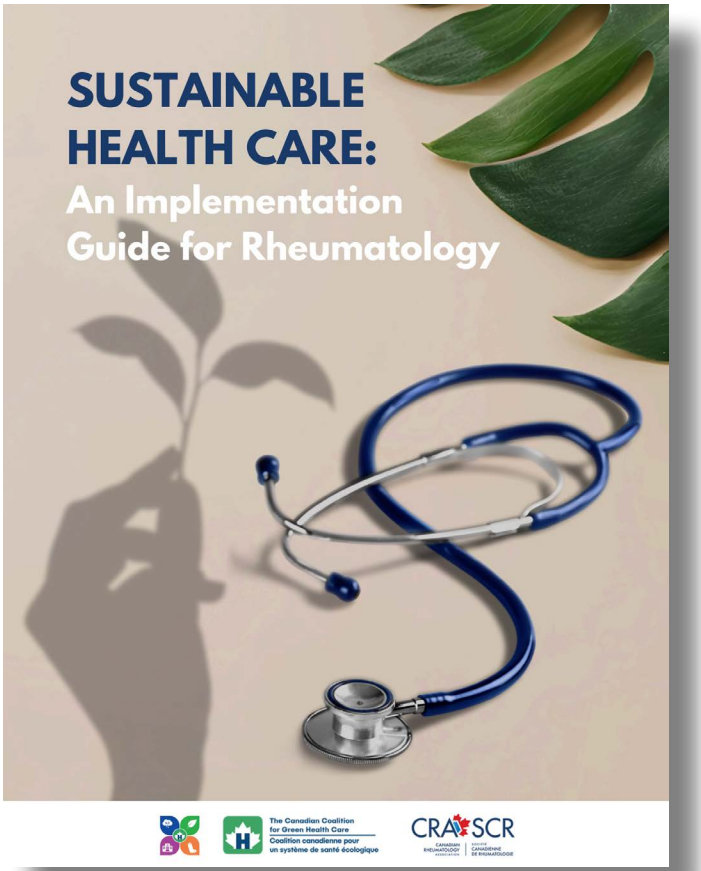
Over the next two years, Chair Dr. Stephanie Tom and task force members Drs. Philip Baer, Claire Barber, Sasha Bernatsky, Molly Dushnicky, Beth Hazel, and Fergus To transformed that interest into a range of practical resources and educational initiatives for the Canadian rheumatology community.

The task force developed the bilingual ***Sustainable Health Care: An Implementation Guide for Rheumatology toolkit*** (*rheum.ca/resources/planetary-health-for-rheumatology/*) produced English and French ***podcast episodes*** (*rheum.ca/resources/aroundtherheum/*), launched the interactive RheumBingo educational initiative, contributed to Choosing Wisely Canada's climate-conscious recommendations, and helped create a dedicated planetary health edition of the *CRAJ*. The group also shared its work through presentations, workshops, and collaborations across Canada and internationally.

As the task force concluded its mandate in summer 2026, the CRA extends its sincere thanks to Dr. Tom and all task force members for their vision, leadership, and dedication.

While the formal task force has concluded, ongoing monitoring of planetary health developments will be incorporated through the CRA's Quality and Innovation Committee and its Choosing Wisely efforts.

The Planetary Health Task Force demonstrated how a member-driven idea can grow into a national initiative through the CRA, creating resources, education, and lasting impact for the rheumatology community. Do you have an initiative or idea you would like to discuss with the CRA? If so, please email *info@rheum.ca*.



View the toolkit here: