

Ontario Rheumatology Association: Meeting Report

By Philip Baer, MDCM, FRCPC, FACP

The Ontario Rheumatology Association (ORA) celebrated its 10th anniversary in fine fashion with its biggest and most successful meeting ever, taking place May 13th to 15th, 2011, in Muskoka. The growth of the meeting required a move to larger facilities at the J.W. Marriott Resort in Minett. This centrally located hotel and conference centre featured calming views of the Canadian Shield, perfectly suited to reducing the stress of the participants' busy professional lives. Registrants included 80 rheumatologists and fellows, as well as over 30 allied health professionals, and representatives from our industry sponsors.

Pre-meeting activities included a variety of Advisory Boards, an Arthritis Health Professions Association (AHPA) course, a rheumatology Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) session for trainees, and an electronic medical record (EMR) fair where vendors showcased systems tailored to rheumatology specialty practice.

The scientific program, assembled by Dr. Janet Pope, was of very high quality. Updates on the Ontario Biologics Research Initiative (OBRI), Canadian Rheumatology Association (CRA) guidelines for rheumatoid arthritis (RA) management, and new models of care were presented. A highlight was the presentation on improving drug access for patients with inflammatory rheumatic diseases, given by Diane McArthur, the Executive Officer of the Ontario Public Drug Program (OPDP). Other updates covered the "1,000 Faces of Lupus" project, the Spondyloarthritis Research Consortium of



Lake Rosseau and the J.W. Marriott resort.



ORA President Vandana Ahluwalia, Secretary-Treasurer Jane Purvis, Administrators Phyllis Pardetti and Wendy Daechsel.



AHP at ORA: Lois Derrick and Lisa Denning, from Newmarket.



At the ORA dance.

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

Canada (SPARCC), and new therapies and guidelines for osteoporosis management.

The ORA meeting always features very interactive small group sessions. This year, workshops covered pain management, scleroderma, vasculitis, billing issues, anti-citrullinated peptide antibodies (ACPAs), EMRs, referral triage, and gout, amongst others.

Our ever-popular Thieves Market returned as well, with participants presenting their most challenging cases of RA, osteoporosis, scleroderma, seronegative arthritides and autoimmune diseases in pregnancy. Our expert moderators, led by Drs. Rick Adachi, Henry Aaverns, Peter Lee, Viktoria Pavlova and Raj Carmona, proved to be entertaining and very difficult to stump.

For the first time ever, meeting attendees participated in a private version of the “Walk to Fight Arthritis” fundraiser, one day ahead of the National Walk. There was a spirited competition between teams of ORA rheumatologists, Arthritis Society professionals and Advanced Clinician

Practitioner in Arthritis Care (ACPAC) therapists. Despite muddy and rainy conditions, 50 participants completed a 5 km walk through the woods of Muskoka in fine form. Over \$12,000 was raised to support the Arthritis Society and we hope to make this a feature of all our future meetings. After developing an appetite on the trail, participants and their families celebrated with a gala dinner-dance Saturday evening. Awards were presented to the ORA Rheumatologist of the Year, Dr. Claire Bombardier, as well as to the most successful individual and team fundraisers in the “Walk to Fight Arthritis.” Entertainment was provided by our one-man band, Jamie Williams, who kept adults and children on the dance floor into the wee hours.

The ORA has evolved significantly as an organization in the past year. Not only did we move our annual meeting to a new location, but our executive team made a successful transition to a new group of leaders. Dr. Vandana Ahluwalia provided dynamic and indefatigable leadership as our new President. She is ably supported by Dr. Jane Purvis as Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Carter Thorne as Past President, and myself as Vice-President. Thanks are also due to our administrative team, including Phyllis Pardetti and Wendy Daechsel, as well as our Executive Director, Denis Morrice.

If you missed this year’s meeting, immediately rectify that oversight by marking your calendar now for next year’s ORA meeting, tentatively booked for the same location, the last weekend in May, 2012.

*Philip A. Baer MDCM, FRCPC, FACP
Vice President, Ontario Rheumatology Association
Chair, OMA Section of Rheumatology
Member, Therapeutics Committee, CRA
Scarborough, Ontario*



Sustenance at the end of the “Walk to Fight Arthritis.”



Preparing for a walk “Into the Woods.”



Dance redux!