

Montreal: Rheumatology at McGill

By Christian A. Pineau, MD, FRCPC

The Rheumatology Division at McGill is proud of our specialized programs, particularly those for rheumatoid arthritis (RA), systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), scleroderma, and chronic pain syndromes. Below is a sampling of some of these activities.

The Rheumatology Division at McGill University

The Rheumatology Division at McGill has a long history of excellence in patient care, research, teaching, and academic social responsibility. The division provides general rheumatology clinics at Montreal area hospitals, including the Royal Victoria, Montreal General Hospital (MGH), Montreal Neurological Institute, Montreal Chest Institute, St. Mary's, Lakeshore General, Shriner's Hospital for Children, Montreal Children's Hospital, and the Jewish General Hospital (JGH). We also provide consultative services with the Constance-Lethbridge Rehabilitation Center and the Jewish Rehabilitation Hospital.

Montreal Children's Hospital Rheumatology

There are currently four full-time pediatric rheumatologists at the Montreal Children's Hospital: Dr. Sarah Campillo, Dr. Gaëlle Chédeville, Dr. Claire LeBlanc, and Dr. Rosie Scuccimarri. All are dedicated clinicians who treat patients with a variety of rheumatic conditions including juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), connective tissue diseases, systemic vasculitis, and periodic fever syndromes. We are fortunate to have an excellent supportive health team consisting of experienced nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work, and administrative personnel.

Strong collaborations with many medical and surgical specialties exist, including ties to the Shriner's Hospital where pediatric patients requiring more complex surgical evaluation and management can be seen. Dr. Chédeville provides an outreach clinic in Val d'Or to meet the needs of our patients who live in the northern

part of the province. With the assistance of Dr. LeBlanc, who was recently appointed as Director of the Pediatric Rheumatology Division, a sport medicine clinic has been established to address non-inflammatory referrals and sport-injury prevention. Our team is also involved in several multicentre clinical studies and trials.

McGill residents and trainees external to our university consistently rate us among the best rotations for teaching excellence. Our entire faculty provides undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. Led by the program director, Dr. Scuccimarri, our pediatric rheumatology-training program is the only bilingual option in Canada and provides training for both pediatric and adult rheumatology residents.

Through a partnership with The Arthritis Society (TAS), Dr. Campillo developed a summer camp for children with arthritis and other rheumatic diseases. This program is highly valued by families who have taken part; it is offered not only to patients at the Montreal Children's Hospital but from all pediatric centers in Quebec. The camp will celebrate its 10th anniversary this year.

The McGill University Health Centre Lupus Clinic

The McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) Lupus Clinic, located at the Montreal General Hospital, is dedicated to providing outstanding patient care and conducting world-class research in SLE. The clinic is one of the largest and best-developed SLE research registries in the world. With over 600 patient participants, dedicated research assistants, and a research nurse, the Lupus Clinic uniquely blends clinical and research activity, to identify determinants of outcomes in this disease.

The clinical team is co-directed by Dr. Ann Clarke and myself, and includes Dr. Sasha Bernatsky, Dr. Evelyne Vinet, and Dr. Emil Nashi. Michele Tobaly joins the Lupus Clinic team in the role of Research Coordinator. Subspecialists in nephrology, dermatology, hematology,

neurology, respirology, and bone health, who attend the clinic periodically to provide their clinical expertise and insights into the most complex cases.

The MUHC Lupus team maintains an extensive database, which has grown from 200 patients in 1990 to over 600 patients today, making it the second-largest of its kind in Canada. Over time, this has led to a multitude of research projects on outcomes in SLE. These accomplishments can be attributed to the leadership of invaluable staff and the fundraising efforts of key volunteers. This clinic has also demonstrated itself a very competitive research entity at an international level; researchers affiliated with the MUHC Lupus Clinic have secured over \$2.4 million in funding from federal granting

agencies such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The Scleroderma Clinic at the Jewish General Hospital

Dr. Murray Baron created the McGill Scleroderma Clinic, located at the Jewish General Hospital, in 1990. Since that time, the clinic has grown to include two other rheumatologists, Dr. Marie Hudson and Dr. Genevieve Gyger, as well as one full-time research nurse (Maura Buchignani). Fellows and medical trainees at all levels



McGill University in beautiful Montreal, Quebec.

attend on a regular basis. Dr. Andrew Hirsch, a respirologist, and cardiologist Dr. David Langleben attend a monthly multi-specialty clinic. In addition to clinical service and teaching, the clinic is also equipped with a high-resolution video-capillaroscope; nailfold video-capillaroscopy is performed by Dr. Gyger.

In 2003, Dr. Baron recruited rheumatologists, cardiologists, respirologists, gastroenterologists, dermatologists, dentists, and psychologists, as well as epidemiologists and basic scientists from across Canada to create the Canadian Scleroderma Research Group (CSRG), with the ultimate goal of increasing the capacity to perform high-impact scleroderma research in Canada. The CSRG has now recruited

over 1,400 patients, of whom more than 250 have been recruited and are followed at the McGill Scleroderma Clinic. Data from the CSRG database has been used to publish over 80 peer-reviewed manuscripts in high-quality journals. Funding from various agencies, including over \$3.5 million from the CIHR, as well as industry and generous donations from patient organizations, such as the Scleroderma Society of Canada, the Scleroderma Society of Ontario, Sclerodermie Quebec, and the Cure Scleroderma Foundation, have helped further these successes.



Statue of Sir James McGill, located on the Lower Campus.

In addition to being well established at the local and national levels, the McGill Scleroderma Clinic ranks highly among the internationally recognized scleroderma programs. International collaborations include, amongst numerous others:

- The creation of an inception scleroderma cohort (Canada, Australia, Spain, Germany, United States);
- An observational study of immunosuppression for skin disease under the leadership of Dr. Ariane Herrick, a world expert on scleroderma based in Manchester, UK;
- The study of clinical correlates of scleroderma-related autoantibodies using individual-patient data from three sites (CSRG, Australia, Houston) and centralized autoantibody testing in Dr. Marvin Fritzler's laboratory located in Calgary.

RA Program at the Royal Victoria Hospital

The RA Program based at the Royal Victoria Hospital site of MUHC was officially initiated in 2011; its goals are to rapidly provide access for and diagnose patients with new onset inflammatory arthritis (IA). The RA Program is part of the quality-of-care-improvement efforts at MUHC and it is linked to the MSK Research Axis and the Outcome Research Axis of the MUHC Research Institute. It aims to provide the highest quality, patient-centered, multidisciplinary care to patients with RA. From the onset, the program adopted the principles of best clinical management in terms of clear, measurable outcomes with deliverables set within pre-defined periods. The RA Program offers ongoing educational activities that provide reliable, up-to-date information for people living with RA as well as for their family and friends. The Program likewise offers patients opportunities to participate in different types of research to improve outcomes, standardize treatments, study basic disease mechanisms, identify prognosis and monitoring biomarkers, and join observational studies (such as the Canadian Early Arthritis Observational Cohort [CATCH]) and drug trials. As part of the Division of Rheumatology at McGill, we are committed to providing teaching and training opportunities in IA for medical trainees as well as community-based medical colleagues.

The RA Program is led by Dr. Ines Colmegna, whose research interests include the role of stem cells in the pathogenesis of arthritis. She is joined by a dedicated team of clinical rheumatologists-scientists: Dr. Pantelis Panopalis (medical economics), Dr. Henri Ménard (protein citrullination and biomarkers), Dr. Michael Stein (ultrasonography imaging), Dr. Susan Bartlett (patient-centered outcome measures), Maria Celia Bazan (physical therapist), and a patient services coordinator.

Young Adults Rheumatologic Diseases Clinic at the Montreal General Hospital

In 2007, the Young Adults Rheumatologic Diseases (YARD) Clinic was created by Dr. Elizabeth Hazel to provide a transition clinic to accommodate the move from a pediatric environment to an adult hospital. Research found many patients had difficulty adjusting to the expected autonomy of an adult hospital, and needed a

transition clinic to accommodate this transition, while allowing for the occasional missed appointment. Over 200 patients between the ages of 18 to 25 are seen annually. An added benefit of the clinic is their partnership with the Constance-Lethbridge Rehabilitation Centre, which offers many services to patients to treat deformities or handicaps caused by their condition.

Pain Clinic at the Montreal General Hospital

The Division of Rheumatology at McGill is fortunate to have Dr. Mary-Ann Fitzcharles, an international expert in pain syndromes, who in addition to general rheumatology, works in the multi-disciplinary pain clinic of the MUHC, as well as conducting a large longitudinal prospective cohort study of fibromyalgia (FM) patients at the Montreal General Hospital. This past year was a very busy one for Dr. Fitzcharles, as the Canadian Fibromyalgia Guide-lines were formally released, and associated manuscripts published, including research papers on medication use in FM, and on medico-legal implications of FM.

Other Activities

Our valued rheumatologists provide additional excellence in clinical care and teaching at the MGH, JGH, and St. Mary's, including Dr. Martin Cohen, Dr. Michael Starr, Dr. Sabrina Fallovolita, Dr. Laeora Berkson (who has particular expertise in medical education), Dr. Leonard Moroz, Dr. Jan Shultz, and Dr. Morton Kapusta. Dr. Berkson, Dr. Colmegna, and Dr. Ménard have been participating in remote clinics in underserved Abitibi.

As divisional director, I am extremely honoured and proud of the activities of our division. We hope to continue delivering the outstanding quality of care our patients deserve while training and mentoring new medical professionals.

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CRUS: Upcoming MSK US Courses

The initial focus of CRUS has been on building the competence in MSK US among rheumatologists. This is to be achieved through integrated hands on teaching with e-learning. Canadian Rheumatology Ultrasound Society (CRUS) strongly encourages Canadian rheumatologists to take part in the upcoming training opportunities:



- **Université de Sherbrooke Musculoskeletal Ultrasound Courses – Part I and 2:**
 - o Basic and intermediate/advanced courses available.
 - o For further information, please contact Dr. Bruns (alessandra.bruns@usherbrooke.ca)
- **CRUS Courses:**
 - o Basic: September 21-22, 2013 and February 1-2, 2014 at McMaster University, and on May 25-26, 2014 at Lake Muskoka.
 - o Refresher/Intermediate: To be held February 24-25, 2014, prior to the CRA Annual Meeting in Whistler, British Columbia.
 - o For further information, please contact Ms. Alyssa Long (along@cheo.on.ca).