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# My Path to Becoming a Rheumatologist

By Stephanie Garner, MD, MSc

At the 2015 CRA meeting in Quebec City, the Training the Rheumatologists of Tomorrow (TROT) group presented an abstract discussing the positive impact of early exposure to rheumatology. As I stood there, it struck me that in my case, (very) early exposure had influenced my decision to not only go into rheumatology but to become a physician.

At the tender age of 12, my choices for “Take Your Kid to Work Day” were to go to the school where my father was a principal or to spend the day with my mother who was an accountant. Luckily, my neighbour, Dr. Mary Bell, offered an alternative and brought me with her to Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre to spend the day at her clinic. I loved it and, during my undergraduate studies, when an opportunity came up to work with Dr. Bell and the Patient Partners program on a knowledge-translation project, I jumped at it. I was fascinated by medicine and the patients and felt rheumatology was an area I could contribute to. This experience heavily influenced my decision to go into medicine.

After completing my undergraduate degree at McGill University, I moved to Calgary to pursue research training and had the privilege of working on a master’s degree with Dr. Steven Edworthy. My area of research interest has been challenging the traditional model of care to look for ways to deliver better care for patients within the limitations of our healthcare system. With the national shortage of rheumatologists, using allied health providers, particularly nurses, in expanded clinical roles is crucial.

While attending medical school in South Australia and residency at the University of Calgary, I had the opportunity to undertake several electives in both community and academic rheumatology. Working with Dr. Carter Thorne and his team at The Arthritis Program (TAP) in Newmarket, Ontario, was an amazing experience and taught me the importance of collaboration. Dr. Chris Penney in Calgary showed me the role of educator, and Drs. Cheryl Barnabe and Deborah Marshall have mentored me in pursuing scholarship.

The transition from internal medicine resident to rheumatology fellow was a welcome one. My husband, son and



Dr. Garner with her husband and son.

I moved from Calgary to Hamilton at the end of June 2016 and, with zealous support from family, settled into Hamilton. My experience here has been fantastic. Whether it be aspirating and injecting a patient’s knee with gout or collaborating with a large team regarding a sick patient with vasculitis, I’m finding my career choice rewarding and challenging.

Amazing mentorship and early exposure have been such an important part of my career path, and I look forward to taking on this role as I move forward with my career.

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