
The Journey from CRA Summer Student to Rheumatologist

By Mohammed Osman, MD, PhD, FRCPC

If you asked me, before I entered medical school, whether I would become a rheumatologist, I would have honestly not known what a rheumatologist was or what conditions they treat. Now, I can certainly say that it is the best fit for me all around, whether in the clinic, in the lab, or in the classroom.

Prior to pursuing medicine, I was trained as a researcher in immunology. Naturally, I had an affinity for hematology and infectious diseases. My first exposure to rheumatology was during my second year of medical school when I was listening to Dr. Anna Oswald describe the pathogenesis of gout with all the lovely diagrams involving interleukins and inflammatory cells. I was inspired to learn more about this intriguing specialty and eventually applied to become a CRA summer student with Dr. Elaine Yacyshyn. If you have worked with her, you will know what I mean when I say her enthusiasm for rheumatology is contagious. During that summer, I spent most of my time in the clinic, but I also learned about the vasculitides, which continue to be a large interest of mine.

After the summer was over, I had learned about rheumatology and had fallen in love with it. I spent countless hours reading about immunology and the pathogenesis of the diseases I had seen in clinic. During the rest of my time in medical school, I continued to learn more about the rheumatologic diseases. I was excited whenever I saw a patient that had an ailment that was like those I had seen in patients I had met as a CRA student—such as the patient

whose knee I aspirated at midnight with Dr. A. Kydd (the senior medical resident on-call at the time). My feelings of belonging were further validated when I went to my first CRA Annual Scientific Meeting in Quebec City.

As a fellow and now a rheumatologist, I have been fortunate enough to meet CRA students and medical residents interested in our specialty. I have tried to convey my experience and passion for rheumatology to them, and I know at least one of them is on their way to becoming a rheumatologist. The summer I spent with Dr. Yacyshyn was when I had started to realize that I wanted to become a rheumatologist.

Because I have always been pre-occupied with understanding why and how diseases happen, I spend much of my time in the lab. Being both at the bench and in the clinic, it can sometimes be hard to find balance. I am fortunate to have the support of my wife, Wassila, and my family. I am also lucky to have colleagues in Edmonton and mentors across the country who are very supportive. I am truly lucky to have picked this specialty with its inspiring patients, amazing colleagues, and so many questions to answer.

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WELCOME TO THE RHEUM

Welcome to the following new members:

Sima Abu Alsaoud, Toronto ON
Husain Bahbahani, Richmond, BC
Nicola Berman, Brooklyn, NY, USA
Bailey Dyck, London, ON

Daniel Ennis, Vancouver, BC
Tahir Kanji, Kingston, ON
Jennifer Lee, Toronto, ON
Alexandra Legge, Halifax, NS

Sarah Malaekah, Montreal, QC
Nancy Maltez, Ottawa, ON
Matthew Piche, London, ON
Ceri Richards, Winnipeg, MB

Fergus To, Vancouver, BC
Richard Tse, Saskatoon, SK
Victoria YY Xu, Toronto, ON