

# Rising Star: Dr. Hugues Allard-Chamard

## Powerful Connections: The Immune System and Rheumatology at the Heart of My Career

Pasteur once said: "Chance favours only the prepared mind." I say: "Chance favours well-mentored minds." Indeed, my path to rheumatology is the result of many unforeseen events, but one thing remains a constant: I have been guided by exceptional people.

Being a bit hesitant by nature, it took some time for me to enter the world of rheumatology. Instead, I was thinking of becoming a pharmacological researcher and fully delving into my passion for orchids and corals. It was from this primary perspective that I encountered science, immunology and medicine. I owe Dr. Artur Fernandes my original impetus to go into medicine. It was the year 2000, and everyone was watching out for the infamous Y2K bug, but Dr. Fernandes had another plan: to discover a new bioactive molecule to treat osteoporosis. It was during my pharmacology practicums with him that I was introduced to the rheumatology department at the *Université de Sherbrooke*. I was struck by the department's intellectual vibrancy and dynamism. This was the beginning of the biological era in rheumatology, and the enthusiasm of the rheumatologists was contagious.

After that, everything happened very quickly. I wanted to be part of that revolution and understand how to use these molecular scalpels to treat immune disorders. The only problem was that none of the programs offered adequate training! But, with the support of the rheumatology department and the *Université de Sherbrooke*, I participated in the launch of the MD PhD program as its first student. This confirmed my interest in immunology and autoimmune disorders, and I soon decided to go into rheumatology.

It was at that point that I met two other mentors and visionaries: Dr. Gilles Boire and Dr. Sophie Roux. They were the ones who encouraged me to further my knowledge of immunology and epigenetics. Thanks to the support of the *Fondation des Médecins de l'Université de Sherbrooke*, I left Quebec for Boston to attend the Ragon Institute of MGH, MIT and Harvard for a three-year postdoc in Dr. Shiv Pillai's laboratory. On top of the benefit of Dr. Pillai's exceptional experience, he linked me to Dr. John Stone, an eminent rheumatologist who needs no introduction. Through working with them, I developed further as an expert in IgG4-related disease and inborn errors of immunity. The common



thread running through this journey is the quest to understand how the immune system works and, more specifically, B lymphocytes, which have become the focus of my research.

I finally returned to Sherbrooke to establish my own research laboratory and begin my clinical practice. I rekindled my passion for orchids and founded an integrated rheumatoid-immuno-genetics clinic to address complex cases of immune disease.

I am profoundly grateful for the people who have supported and encouraged me. Without the invaluable mentors I have met along the way, I would not have become a fraction of who I am, and I must admit that my career path would have been a lot duller!

*Hugues Allard-Chamard, MD, PhD, FRCPC  
Rheumatologist, Immunologist,  
Assistant Professor,  
Université de Sherbrooke  
Sherbrooke, Quebec*