

Rising Star: Dr. Sabrina Hoa

To the CRAJ readership,

I am very honoured to have received this invitation to write about my research, accomplishments and career trajectory as a rheumatologist. After completing my MD and internal medicine residency at McGill University, I pursued my rheumatology training at *Université de Montréal*, my post-doctoral fellowship in scleroderma at the Jewish General Hospital/Lady Davis Institute for Medical Research, and a Masters in Epidemiology at McGill University under the supervision of Marie Hudson, MD, MPH and Sasha Bernatsky, MD, PhD. The topic of my thesis was the role of immunosuppressive drugs in the prevention and early treatment of scleroderma-associated interstitial lung disease (SSc-ILD). Using data from the Canadian Scleroderma Research Group (CSRG) cohort, I showed that patients with mild SSc-ILD who were treated with mycophenolate or cyclophosphamide had better lung function and a lower risk of clinically meaningful progression in lung disease over two years, suggesting that a window of treatment opportunity may exist to preserve lung function in SSc-ILD. This research was selected by The Arthritis Society as part of the Top 10 Research Advances of 2019.

I began my faculty appointment as an Assistant Professor with the Faculty of Medicine at *Université de Montréal* in 2019. I am working as a rheumatologist and clinician-scientist at the *Centre Hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal (CHUM)* and the CHUM Research Centre. As a clinician, I participate actively in the specialized connective tissue disease and ILD clinics at the CHUM. I have established a scleroderma clinic to further optimize patient experience, teaching, and research activities. As a researcher, I am supported by a *Fonds de Recherche du Québec — Santé Junior 1 Clinician Research Scholar award* since 2022. My research program focuses on early risk stratification and treatment strategies in mild SSc-ILD. I recently received a Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) Project Grant to conduct a pilot randomized controlled trial comparing mycophenolate mofetil to placebo



in subclinical SSc-ILD. I have recently been appointed as chairholder of the *Université de Montréal Scleroderma Research Chair*, following in the great footsteps of Jean-Luc Sénécal, MD, who held the Chair for the past 20 years.

I am privileged to be a member of several research networks, including the CSRG, the Scleroderma Patient-centered Intervention Network (SPIN), the Canadian Research Group of Rheumatology in Immuno-Oncology (CARIO), and Arthritis Research Canada. I am also very grateful to be surrounded by wonderful and supportive colleagues — clinicians, researchers, mentors, students and residents — as well as very smart patients, who motivate and inspire me in my work as a scleroderma researcher. I also wish to acknowledge the strong and ongoing support of *Sclé-*

rodermie Québec since my Fellowship. I am particularly indebted to my mentors, Dr. Marie Hudson and Dr. Jean-Luc Sénécal, who have supported, guided and inspired me throughout my career journey in rheumatology. Finally, all would not have been possible without the unwavering support of my family. As a mother of three young children, I wish to encourage everyone, particularly rheumatology residents and fellows, not to be afraid to pursue their research interests!

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