

B.C. Society of Rheumatologists (BCSR) — Update from the Pacific

By Jason Kur, MD, FRCPC

2023 was a year for reconnection in British Columbia (BC) Rheumatology. We have reconnected through leadership activities, learnings, and celebrations.

Drs. Tommy Gerschman and Michelle Teo continue to lead the way with their impactful project in specialist team care. Ten sites and eight different specialties have transformed their practices based on learnings primarily gathered from the rheumatology nursing experience over the past decade. System transformation in BC is also gaining momentum as we put the challenging days of the pandemic behind

us. A new provincial digital health strategy is in the works with high hopes to “axe the fax”. Time will tell how successful this will be, but the potential to streamline the referral process for specialists is significant. In addition, the Ministry of Health is very much interested in capturing better wait-time data. It seems this province is at the beginning of some critical and much-needed system transformation. We are still struggling with shortages in primary care. However, there have been some limited community successes with the new Longitudinal Family Practice (LFP) model that was announced last year as part of the latest Physician Master Agreement (PMA). Rheumatology also concluded another successful round of intersectional disparity negotiations as mandated by the last PMA. For the first time, there was a concerted effort to try and identify and address some of the factors contributing to the gender pay gap in medicine.

In addition to the annual Western Alliance of Rheumatology meeting hosted in Kelowna in the spring, Dr. David Collins chaired the North West Rheumatology Society (NWRs) meeting in 2023. At this gathering, the community recognized our dear friend and colleague Dr. Luke Chen (hematology) as an honorary BC rheumatology member for his contributions and collaborations throughout his career in BC. His recent relocation to Halifax is a gain for the East Coast. The 18th annual British Columbia Rheumatology Invitational Education Series (BRIESE) took place in September. Another stellar event, with learnings from Dr. Tom Appleton (University of Western Ontario), Dr. Mohammad Bardi (University of British Columbia), Dr. Cheryl Barnabe (University of Calgary), Dr. Daniel Marinescu (University of British Columbia), Dr. Alexis Ogdie-Beatty (University of Pennsylvania) and Dr. Michelle Petri (Johns Hopkins Medicine).

We also took the opportunity to praise some of our finest with the Annual BCSR/UBC Award presenta-



From left to right: Kam Shojania, Shahin Jamal, and Annie Colwill at BRIESE and, in second photo, David Collins and Luke Chen at NWRs.

tions in September. The Innovation Award was given to Dr. Shahin Jamal. She has become an international expert in immune complications of cancer immunotherapy. She co-founded the pioneering CanRIO (www.canrio.ca) — The Canadian Research Group of Rheumatology in Immunology. Dr. Jamal's research will help patients with cancer who have immune complications and will also shed light on the triggers and treatment of our patients with autoimmune rheumatic diseases. Dr. Peter Van Stolk was awarded the UBC BCSR Teaching Award for outstanding contributions to the medical training program. Dr. Van Stolk, who practices in Kelowna, demonstrates the importance of mentorship and teaching in communities outside Vancouver's lower mainland.

Finally, Dr. Alice Klinkhoff received the Advocacy Award. She was the medical director of the Mary Pack Arthritis Program for 18 years. Dr. Klinkhoff has always been a strong advocate for patients focusing on access to vital rheumatology care resources. Dr. Klinkhoff has also served for many years as a medical link in Haida Gwaii, where she has cared for patients as part of the Mary Pack Arthritis Program Travelling Consultation Service.

We also took time to properly fete the contributions of some pillars of the BC rheumatology community who retired over the past few years, but due to the pandemic were deprived of an appropriate celebration. A special gala was held at the Arbutus Club in Vancouver in August. Dr. Milton Baker, Dr. James Dunne, Dr. John Esdaile, and Dr. Graham Reid were roasted and toasted by the entire BC community.

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