

**THE CANADIAN
SCLERODERMA
RESEARCH
GROUP**

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THE CONNECTOR

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The Fourth Annual Meeting of the CSRG

The Fourth Annual Meeting of the CSRG took place in Halifax from November 25th to the 27th, 2010. Like last year, the Scleroderma Society of Canada (SSC) held their meeting in conjunction with ours.

This year, three students were chosen based on the quality of their summaries to give extensive presentations on their projects. Katherine Milette, Dr. Brett Thombs's clinical science student, Daniel You, a summer student with Dr. Marvin Fritzier and Dr. Sunil Parapuram, a basic science post-doctoral student under Dr. Andrew Leask's supervision. All three were given honorary certificates by Dr. Murray Baron on behalf of the CSRG for their outstanding abstracts.



Dr. Baron awarding Katherine Milette, Daniel You and Sunil Parapuram with excellence awards.

SSC had organized a "Wellness Fair" for the patients, where multiple booths had very educational and useful information. Some of these booths were also held by CSRG researchers, such as Dr. Brett Thombs and Dr. Mervyn Gornitsky. During the Wellness fair, the students also held a poster session which was very interesting and informative for all the patients and researchers alike. We have had many positive comments about this great experience.

This year, we had a special guest join us, Dr. Sergio Toloza. He is a new rheumatologist from Argentina who is now part of the CSRG. He just started the *Argentinian Scleroderma Research Group*.



Dr. Baron with members of SSC and the Halifax Health Minister during the Wellness Fair.

Dr. Toloza and his colleague Dr. Rivero will soon be assessing hundreds of Scleroderma patients from Argentina. They will also enter their data into our Web-based CSRG database. This is opening the door to more great collaborative work, beyond our Canadian borders.

We would like to say a special thank you to our sponsors for their continued support: Actelion, Pfizer, Amgen, Wyeth, Lilly, Sanofi Aventis, GlaxoSmithKline and Roche. **Thank you!!**

Finally, we would also like to thank all our rheumatologists, researchers, trainees and students who participated and contribute to the ongoing growth of the CSRG.

The CSRG's next Annual Scientific Meeting will be held within the Canadian Arthritis Network's yearly meeting, next October, 2011 in Quebec City. ■

Here are the details regarding the dates:

Recruiting rheumatologists: from Friday, October 28 to Sunday, October 30.

Trainees: from Thursday, October 27 to Saturday, October 29.

All other members: from Friday, October 28 to Saturday, October 29.

See you all then!

New Members of the CSRG Family!

Many of you might not yet have had the chance to meet them, but we have two new members of the CSRG team in Montreal: Maria Scolack and Solène Tatibouet.

Maria is Dr. Baron's new research assistant at the Montreal Jewish General Hospital site. She has a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Psychology and a minor in Philosophy and Behavioural Sciences which she received at McGill University. Despite being born and raised in Montreal, Maria has quite a diverse background being half Greek and half Ukrainian. In her spare time, she volunteers at *Tel-aide* and enjoys spending time with family and friends.



Maria Scolack

Solène is a Statistician at the Jewish General Hospital's epi-

demology department who just moved to Montreal from France. She works very closely with Dr. Russell Steele and Dr. Marie Hudson on CSRG projects. She has a BSc. in Statistics/Informatics from the University of Vannes (France) and an MSc. of Biostatistics at the Bordeaux School of Public Health (ISPED).



Solène Tatibouet

During her academic formation Solène had several internships, the latest one at the Chest Institute of McGill University, under the supervision of Dr. Andrea Benedetti, where she had the chance to discover our beautiful and vibrant city, Montreal. As far as her personal background goes, Solène is from a little city in the region of Brittany (France) called Auray. In her spare time, she enjoys playing basketball, guitar and reading. ■

In the Spotlight—Daphna Harel

Daphna Harel was born in Petach Tikva, Israel but spent most of her life in Livingston, New Jersey. She completed an Honours degree in Probability and Statistics at McGill University last spring, and is currently working towards a PhD in Applied Statistics at McGill. Her research interests include Item Response Theory and statistical methodology. Daphna hopes to create new statistical methods that are applicable to survey and questionnaire data, and that can be useful to researchers in many different fields. She is currently working with Dr. Russell Steele on analyzing the psychometric properties of fatigue questionnaires in patients with Scleroderma. When she's not studying or working for the CSRG, Daphna can be found swing dancing on social dance floors across the continent, or baking cookies and cupcakes. ■



News from the 2011 CRA Meeting



Suzanne Taillefer, Dr. Marie Hudson and Dr. Murray Baron at the CRA in Cancun, Mexico

The Canadian Rheumatology Association (CRA) held their 66th annual scientific meeting in Cancun Mexico from February 10th to the 15th. Not only was the location beautiful, but the meeting was very interesting and filled with rheumatologists from all over Canada and Mexico. One of the CSRG's own trainees, Ilya

Razykov, also attended to present a poster.

The CSRG is very proud to announce that two of our recruiting rheumatologists were distinguished with awards at the conference. **Dr. Marie Hudson** received a Young Investigator award and **Dr. Nader Khalidi** was awarded a Teacher-Educator distinction. ■

Recent CSRG Publications Involving Students

1. Hudson M, Lo E, Lu Y, **Hercz D**, Baron M, Steele R, Canadian Scleroderma Research Group. Cigarette smoking in patients with systemic sclerosis. *Arthritis Rheum* 2011; 63(1): 230-8.
2. **Khimdas S, Harding S**, Bonner A, Zummer B, Baron M, Pope J, Canadian Scleroderma Research Group. Associations with digital ulcers in a large cohort of systemic sclerosis: Results from the Canadian Scleroderma Research Group registry. *Arthritis Care Res (Hoboken)* 2011; 63(1): 142-9.
3. **Jewett L**, Hudson M, Baron M, Thombs B, Canadian Scleroderma Research Group. Disentangling body image dissatisfaction and social discomfort in Systemic Sclerosis: A structural equation modeling approach. Submitted 2010.
4. **Jewett LR**, Hudson M, Haythornthwaite JA, Heinberg L, Wigley FM, Baron M, Thombs BD, Canadian Scleroderma Research Group. Development and validation of the brief-satisfaction with appearance scale for systemic sclerosis. *Arthritis Care Res (Hoboken)* 2010; 62(12): 1779-86.
5. **Knafo R**, Thombs B, Wigley F, Heinberg L, Haythornthwaite JA. The association of body image dissatisfaction and pain with reduced sexual function in women with Systemic Sclerosis. Submitted 2010.
6. **Milette K, Razykov I**, Pope J, Hudson M, Motivala SJ, Baron M, Thombs BD. Clinical correlates of sleep problems in systemic sclerosis: The prominent role of pain. *Rheumatology (Oxford)* 2010; [Epub ahead of print].
7. **Schnitzer M**, Hudson M, Baron M, Steele R, Canadian Scleroderma Research Group. Disability in Systemic Sclerosis - a longitudinal observational study. *J Rheumatol* 2010; [Epub ahead of print].
8. Thombs BD, van Lankveld W, Bassel M, Baron M, Buzza R, Haslam S, Haythornthwaite JA, Hudson M, **Jewett LR, Knafo R**, Kwakkenbos L, Malcarne VL, **Milette K**, Motivala SJ, **Newton EG**, Nielson WR, Pacy M, **Razykov I, Schieir O**, Taillefer S, Worrion-Sauve M. Psychological health and well-being in systemic sclerosis: State of the science and consensus research agenda. *Arthritis Care Res* 2010; 62(8): 1181-9.
9. Walker JG, Steele RJ, **Schnitzer M**, Taillefer S, Baron M, Hudson M, Canadian Scleroderma Research Group. The association between disease activity and duration in Systemic Sclerosis. *J Rheumatol* 2010; 37(11): 2299-306.

The CSRG is expanding South of the Border!



Collaborative work between Canada and Latin American countries in the field of rheumatology is not new. In fact, the members of the Canadian Rheumatology Association (CRA) have met in Mexico twice already, along with the *Mexicano Collegio of Rheumatologia*, in order to encourage more collaborative work between the two countries. These meetings have been quite successful and have given the opportunity to our research group to go beyond the border, and work with other rheumatologists interested in better understanding Scleroderma.

The CSRG is proud to announce that it now has four new recruiting sites is Argentina and one in Mexico City.

Dr. Toloza and **Dr. Rivero** are heading a group of Rheumatologists in Argentina, dedicated to better understanding Argentinian patients with Scleroderma and compare them to patients with the same disease who live elsewhere.

We also just started working with Dr. Tatiana Rodriguez, a rheumatologist from Mexico City who is heading the Mexican

recruiting site. She also just joined our Group and is starting to assess Scleroderma patients in her own country and entering their data in our database.

Our case report forms were translated into South-American Spanish and somewhat adapted to allow cultural differences when it came to education levels, income and ethnicity.

Both Groups will be allowed to use our Web-based database to enter their data, making it very easy to compare our Canadian patients to those of two other countries.

Welcome to our South American colleagues!



Dr. Murray Baron & Dr. Sergio Toloza

CSRG  GRCS

We would love to hear from you!

If you have any questions or comments about the content of this newsletter, or would like to contribute to our next issue, please do not hesitate to contact Mireille Guirguis via email:

mguirguis@jgh.mcgill.ca

Students Updates

Several of the CSRG trainees have been recipients of McGill awards this year. Daphna Harel, who is working under the supervision of Dr. Russell Steele has received a Maysie MacSporran award. Katherine Milette and Vanessa Delisle who are both Dr. Brett Thombs's trainees were each awarded a McGill Graduate Studies Fellowship.■

Congratulations!

Web Seminars



This year, the Web Seminars will take place in the months of April and May. These consist of live and recorded half hour presentations by each of the Trainees, explaining and sharing with the rest of the group how their study is going. The participants this year are Yuen Yee Ho, Daphna Harel, Samah Mansour, Katherine

Milette, Ali Bouallegue, Monique Arts, Wei Sha and Ilya Razykov. These Seminars are a great opportunity to gather the CSRG clinical and biological mentors and trainees together, allowing very interesting exchanges to take place.■

To view past recordings, please contact Mireille Guirguis at mguirguis@jgh.mcgill.ca.

Upcoming Meetings



EULAR

Date: May 25—28, 2011
Location: London, England
For more information:
www.eular.org/

The 12th Annual Scleroderma Workshop

Date: July 24—27, 2011
Location: Cambridge, UK
For more information:
www.sclerodermaworkshop.org/



CSRG 5th Annual Scientific Meeting

Date:
 Recruiting rheumatologists: October 28-30, 2011
 Trainees: October 27- October 29, 2011
 All other members: October 28- October 29, 2011
Location: Quebec City, Canada.
For more information: contact Sabrina Gravel at sgravel@jgh.mcgill.ca

American College of Rheumatology (ACR)

Date: November 4-9, 2011
Location: Chicago, Illinois.
For more information:
www.rheumatology.org/education/annual/index.asp

