

Student-led rheumatology interest group increases interest in field

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According to data from the 2005 and 2016 American College of Rheumatology Workforce Studies, a significant increase in the demand for rheumatologists is expected in the coming years. However, the number of trained rheumatologists is declining.

Interest in a specialty often begins in [medical school](#) and data show student interest in [rheumatology](#) typically declines from the first to second year of medical school, according to a [group](#) of student and faculty researchers from the George Washington University (GW). The group also found that students' experience with a subject in school and interactions with a mentoring faculty member play significant roles in their commitment to the specialty.

A group of GW [medical students](#), advised by Victoria Shanmugam, MD, associate professor of medicine at the GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences, established the Rheumatology Interest Group and published their results in the *International Journal of Rheumatology*. The group found that a student-led interest group creates an increase in [student](#) engagement with rheumatology, as represented by increased numbers in publications by rheumatology students and increased enrollment in the rheumatology elective.

"The group was started with the enthusiasm of a group of three students," Shanmugam said. "They enjoyed the rheumatology module in their second year and wanted to set up an interest group for fellow students who might be interested in the specialty."

Inspired by the existence of other subspecialty [interest](#) groups in psychiatry and cardiology, the students established the Rheumatology Interest Group in April 2015 to provide resources and mentorship to students considering the field of rheumatology.

The meetings have several different formats, explained Sonia Silinsky Krupnikova, MD '17, an internal medicine resident at the GW School of Medicine and Health Sciences and first author of the study. "Some have patient panels, where patients come and give testimonials as to why they value their relationship with their rheumatologists. Other meetings are more career-focused and some center on how to choose and get involved in research and finding a research mentor."

More than three years later, the group is still regularly well-attended, with 20 or more students per session and involvement from faculty and fellows, said Shanmugam. "If further investigation proves this measure successful, this could be easily replicated at other institutions and may help address rheumatology workforce deficits."

More information: Sonia Silinsky Krupnikova et al, Impact of a Student-Led Rheumatology Interest Group on Medical Student Interest in Rheumatology, *International Journal of Rheumatology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1155/2019/4892707](#)

Provided by George Washington University

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