

# Prologue: 2021 Annual Meeting of the Group for Research and Assessment of Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis (GRAPPA)

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**ABSTRACT.** The Group for Research and Assessment of Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis (GRAPPA) held its annual meeting in 2021 in an online format due to travel restrictions during the ongoing COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) pandemic. The virtual meeting was attended by rheumatologists, dermatologists, representatives of biopharmaceutical companies, and patient research partners. Similar to previous years, GRAPPA's annual meeting focused on the 3 overlapping missions of education, research, and clinical care of psoriatic disease (PsD). The virtual meeting allowed a variety of different types of sessions to be held, including the trainee symposium, keynote lectures, interactive sessions (5 Meet the Experts sessions, a debate on first-line therapy, and 5 guided poster sessions), 4 workshops (trainee workshop focusing on the diagnosis of PsD, ultrasound, magnetic resonance imaging, and the International Dermatology Outcome Measures group), updates on a variety of research topics (research findings from the 2020 GRAPPA research grant awardees, 3 basic science talks, Outcome Measures in Rheumatology [OMERACT] Working Group efforts, and Collaborative Research Network progress), current "hot topics" (use of Janus kinase inhibitors, promoting diversity and inclusion in PsD, progress on the updated GRAPPA treatment recommendations, and the introduction of the Young GRAPPA member group), and the presentation of four 2021 GRAPPA grant awardees and election results. In this prologue, we introduce the papers that summarize this meeting.

**Key Indexing Terms:** dermatology, GRAPPA, OMERACT, outcome measures, psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis

The 2021 annual meeting of the Group for Research and Assessment of Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis (GRAPPA) was held over 3 days (July 8–10, 2021) on a web-based platform due to ongoing safety concerns and travel restrictions related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The virtual format allowed greater access for our international membership, which currently includes over 986 members composed primarily of rheumatologists and dermatologists (n = 763), clinicians from

other specialties (n = 77), representatives of biopharmaceutical companies (n = 119), and patient research partners (n = 27). The online format was a mix of recorded content and live panel discussions with audience participation using the chat feature. Reports of previous annual meetings have been published elsewhere.<sup>1–12</sup>

As is customary, the meeting kicked off with the GRAPPA trainee symposium. This session consisted of 5 presentations

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by rheumatology and dermatology trainees and included the following topics: prediction of cardiovascular events in psoriatic disease (PsD), correlation between spine abnormalities and clinical findings, biomechanical stress as a trigger for psoriatic arthritis (PsA), differences in DNA methylation among twins with PsD, and critical proteins associated with induction of PsD. In addition, 22 posters were presented at 5 discussion sessions.<sup>13</sup>

As with the 2020 meeting, we held a COVID-19 update session, this year focusing on COVID-19 diagnostic testing and vaccine development.<sup>14</sup> Current published guidelines, including recommendations on COVID-19 testing and vaccine response in patients receiving immunomodulating/immunosuppressive therapies, were presented then followed by a panel discussion.

Also returning this year was the debate, covering the question: In the treatment of patients with psoriasis (PsO) or PsA, should interleukin (IL)-17 or IL-23 inhibitors be used before tumor necrosis factor inhibitors? Two dermatologists and 2 rheumatologists engaged in a lively discussion on this topic.<sup>15</sup>

The “hot topics” sessions included 2 talks covering the dermatologist’s and rheumatologist’s perspectives on safety considerations of Janus kinase inhibitors (JAKi) in PsDs<sup>16</sup> and a program focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion, highlighting known healthcare disparities and potential solutions.<sup>17</sup>

The final plenary session covered the 2021 GRAPPA treatment recommendations update. Each of the treatment domain groups summarized their systematic literature reviews and recommendations. Overarching principles and summary evidence tables, including results from a GRAPPA membership survey to assess levels of agreement, were presented and discussed.<sup>18</sup>

Five Meet the Experts sessions, featuring 9 GRAPPA faculty members, were conducted to allow informal interaction between faculty and meeting participants.<sup>19</sup> Topics included the future of GRAPPA, benefits of a GRAPPA copresidency, and ideas to encourage more involvement by dermatologists; pustular psoriasis and SAPHO (synovitis, acne, pustulosis, hyperostosis, and osteomyelitis) syndrome; JAKi for treatment of PsA; topical agents for treatment of PsO; a comparison of axial PsA and axial spondyloarthritis (axSpA); and composite measures in PsA.

Concurrent to the Meet the Experts sessions, the inaugural meeting of the Young GRAPPA group was held. Young GRAPPA was formed in 2021 to provide an early career membership option to improve the inclusion of and support for young researchers and physicians beginning their careers. The initial organizational framework and different components and aims of this group were discussed<sup>20</sup> and a link to the GRAPPA website was provided (see GRAPPA Early Career Membership under the Membership tab at <https://grappa.memberclicks.net>).

Four workshops were held during the meeting. The GRAPPA ultrasound committee held a workshop to cover 3 topics: (1) the Diagnostic Ultrasound Enthesitis Tool (DUET) project; (2) a data-driven approach for scoring systems to distinguish PsA from non-PsA; and (3) the usefulness of sonography of the hands and detection of inflammatory lesions associated with PsA.<sup>21</sup> The magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) working group gave presentations on what constitutes a positive MRI for

clinical trial recruitment of individuals with axial involvement, and with peripheral involvement in PsA.<sup>22</sup> The International Dermatology Outcome Measures workshop covered their progress, including the development of a 7-item treatment satisfaction questionnaire specifically for dermatological conditions, and work on implementing a screening tool for patients with PsO in clinical trials.<sup>23</sup> The fourth workshop focused on challenges in the diagnosis and assessment of cutaneous PsO and PsA, differential diagnosis, diagnostic errors and pitfalls, patient-reported outcomes and composite measures in the assessment of PsA, and the patient perspective on diagnosis and assessment.<sup>24</sup>

Several sessions were devoted to research, including 3 basic science sessions and reports from the GRAPPA–Outcome Measures in Rheumatology (OMERACT) Working Group and the Collaborative Research Network (CRN). The basic science sessions included talks on serum protein biomarkers in PsA,<sup>25</sup> recent findings on CD4+ production of IL-17A, and the complex role of the intestinal microbiome in PsA and how microbiome profiles may be useful to predict treatment responses.<sup>26</sup> The GRAPPA-OMERACT group presented an update on the domain of structural damage and discussed the steps taken to assess the domain match and feasibility of plain radiographic instruments in the assessment of structural damage in PsA.<sup>27</sup> The CRN session addressed novel technological approaches to address unmet needs in PsO and challenges in dealing with big data analysis.<sup>28</sup> The research sessions concluded with the 2019 and 2020 research grant coawardees presenting their research projects and preliminary results.<sup>29</sup>

The close of the meeting included our inauguration ceremony for new leadership and election results. Dr. April Armstrong, a dermatologist from Los Angeles, California, USA, and Dr. Oliver FitzGerald, a rheumatologist from Dublin, Ireland, will be sharing the job as first-ever copresidents to provide equal representation for dermatology and rheumatology. Revisions of the bylaws, election results for the steering committee, and research awards were presented.

Overall, the meeting attendance was excellent, with over 440 registered and over 270 attendees. Of those responding to our meeting survey (n = 74), 94.5% gave the event an overall rating of excellent or very good. Of the respondents, 72% would prefer a hybrid format for future events. It is our hope that we will be able to hold our 2022 annual meeting as a live or hybrid event in Brooklyn, New York, USA.

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