

SAA/Bruckel Early Career Investigator Award:

Meet Our Latest Awardees

As part of SAA's ongoing mission to expand horizons in spondyloarthritis research, we hope to encourage and support new, upcoming rheumatologists and researchers in advancing spondyloarthritis research.

The SAA/Bruckel Early Career Investigator Award, created in 2001, recognizes outstanding "contributions to the care and understanding of patients with spondyloarthritis." The award winner receives a \$20,000 grant from SAA to use in spondyloarthritis research. The annual award is usually given to just one investigator; however, on rare occasions when the competition is too tough, SAA awards multiple \$20,000 awards. This was one such year.

We recognize the numerous contributions of, and introduce our readers to, Drs. Kristine Kuhn and Maureen Dubreuil.



Kristine Kuhn, MD, PhD

SAA/Bruckel Early Career Investigator Awardee

Assistant Professor,
Medicine

Division of Rheumatology

University of Colorado
School of Medicine

Dr. Kristine Kuhn obtained her MD and PhD at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. There she developed her interest in rheumatology while working on her PhD in arthritis. After graduating medical school, Dr. Kuhn moved to St. Louis, MO to complete her residency in internal medicine and fellowship in rheumatology at Barnes-Jewish Hospital and Washington University. During this training, Dr. Kuhn observed many challenges that individuals face in the diagnosis and treatment of spondyloarthritis. Therefore, she began to focus on this topic in her research and clinical activities when she returned to Colorado as a faculty member in 2013 to start her own research program.

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Spondylitis Plus: Please tell us a bit about your general research focus, your recent work, and what you are most excited about in SpA research.

Dr. Kuhn: “My clinical and research interests are related to spondyloarthritis with a special emphasis for those with overlapping Inflammatory Bowel Diseases (IBD). Research has shown that 30-50% of patients with spondyloarthritis will develop bowel inflammation and about 50% of patients with IBD develop disease outside of the intestines that affects their eyes, skin, and joints, which prompts consultation with a rheumatologist. Our recent work is looking at how gut bacteria develop local immune cells that traffic to the joints and initiate arthritis. We hope to identify these cells as a biomarker for disease as well as inhibit this trafficking for the treatment of spondyloarthritis.”

Spondylitis Plus: How will the SAA/Bruckel award help support your research?

Dr. Kuhn: “Medical research, in general, is benefiting from the development of some exciting new tools that allow us to investigate a large number of factors in a small piece of tissue or in blood. Support from the SAA/Bruckel award will allow us to utilize these technologies. Such work will allow more rapid advancements for spondyloarthritis.”