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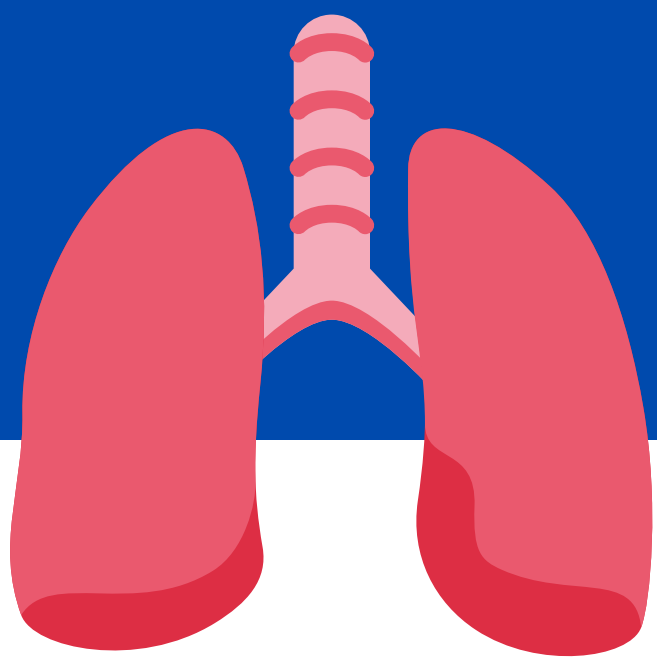
Welcome to the Winter 2022 Research Report! In this edition, we will be discussing 2 newer studies, providing updates for the OPT-JIA and COVID Rheum studies, and showing off the results from our Winter door decorating contest. We hope you enjoy catching a glimpse into what our Rheumatology Research team is up to!

Interested in joining our research studies?

Contact us at [rheumresearch@phsa.ca](mailto:rheumresearch@phsa.ca)

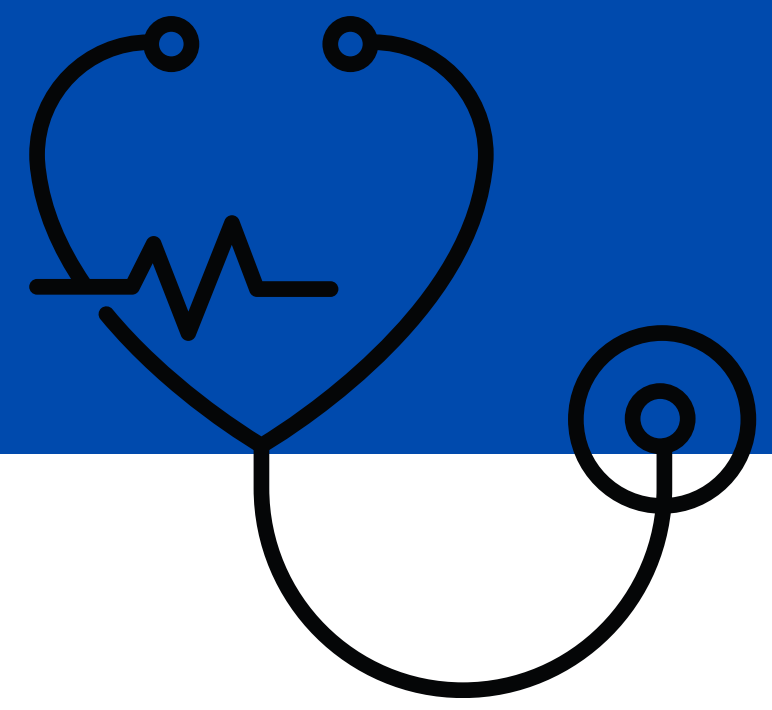
Visit our website for more information:

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# New Kids on the Block!

## Our Newest Projects



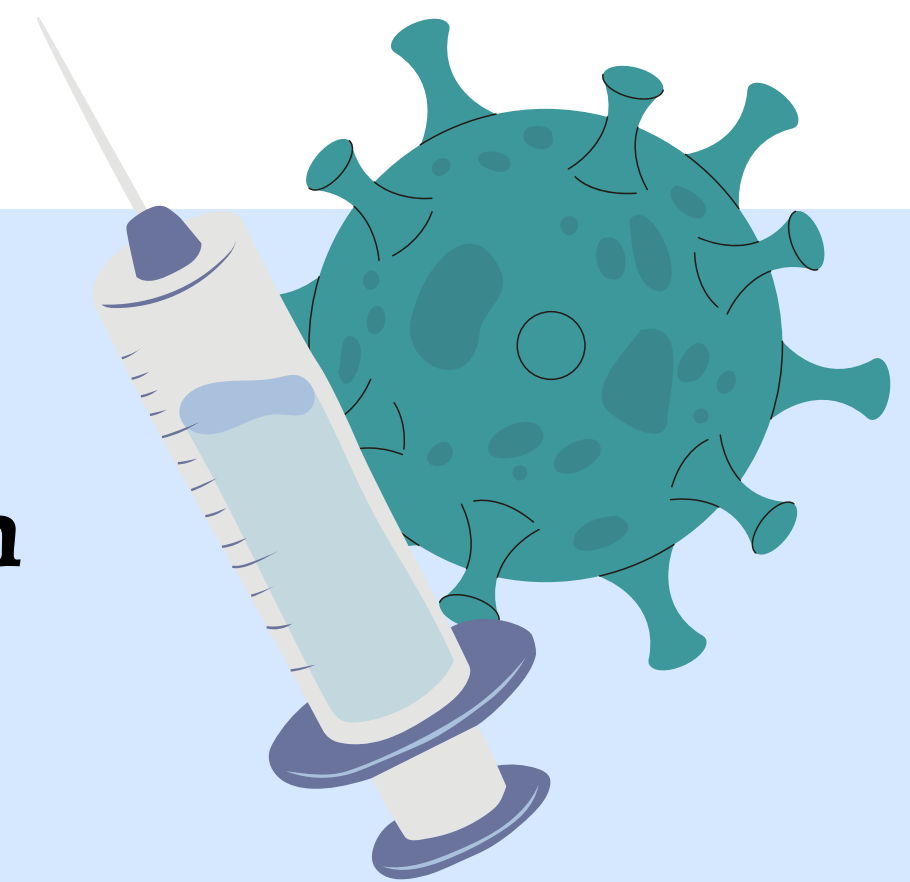
### **SLE possibly associated with heart or lung abnormalities**

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) can affect the heart or lungs in a small proportion of children with this disease. It can cause problems that can vary from being mild and insignificant to devastating. Heart and lung problems can develop slowly, and patients may have no symptoms in the beginning. The aim in managing SLE is to treat problems early, before they become severe and permanent damage occurs. Therefore, our clinic patients with SLE are routinely screened every 18-24 month for any early abnormalities with echocardiograms (ultrasounds of the heart) and Pulmonary Function Tests (lung tests). This frequency was based on our previous studies done over 30 years ago, but current testing equipment has become more advanced.

For this study we will review the heart and lung charts of patients who were diagnosed with SLE since 2005 and followed for at least 2 years up until 2018. We will review the type of abnormalities found and how often they occurred, to determine whether our current screening schedule successfully identifies patients at risk. Is testing done too often, or not often enough? Do tests only identify problems that would be identified with routine clinic assessments? Do our routine screening practices need to change?



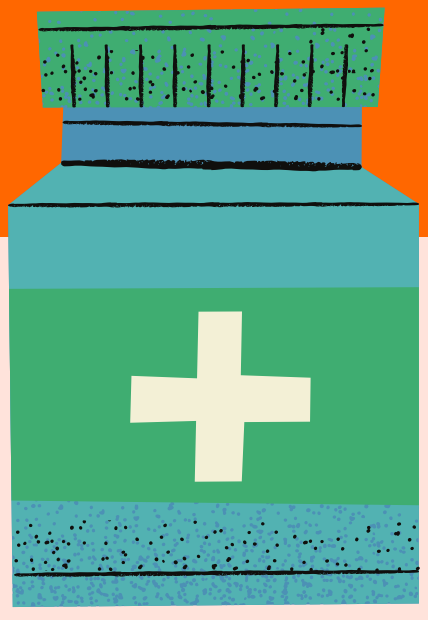
### **Immunization Coverage and Risk Factors for Underimmunization in Pediatric Rheumatology Patients**



Children with rheumatic diseases such as juvenile idiopathic arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, juvenile dermatomyositis, uveitis, and vasculitis are more susceptible to invasive infectious diseases. Therefore, complete vaccination has been recommended to reduce the likelihood of these diseases and risk of their complications. However, a combination of parental concerns, misunderstandings, and unanswered questions has led to a lower vaccination rate in children with chronic inflammatory diseases. How can we increase vaccine coverage in this population, especially those using biologic therapies?

For this study we will review the immunization records of Pediatric Rheumatology patients from 2017-2019. How many children with rheumatic diseases are getting vaccinated at the time of their diagnosis or first immunosuppressive therapy? What are the risk factors for delayed or poor immunization coverage in our patients?

# Updates and New Findings!



## OPT-JIA



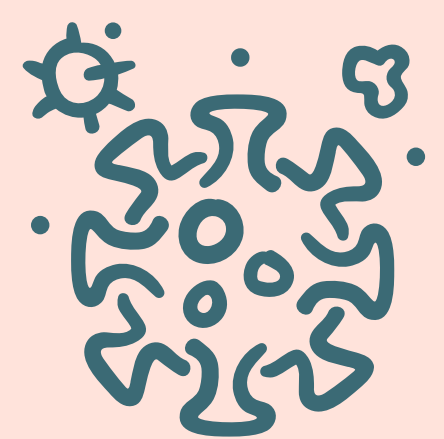
With support from The Arthritis Society, we are currently conducting a study to determine the best way to use Ondansetron to prevent nausea in children with juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) who are treated with Methotrexate. Methotrexate is a very effective treatment for JIA; however, it can cause debilitating nausea, vomiting, and stomach upsets in up to 30% of patients. Ondansetron is a medication that can help prevent nausea and vomiting. We want to determine whether it would be better to take Ondansetron only after side effects (nausea, vomiting) of Methotrexate appear, or to take Ondansetron as soon as a patient starts Methotrexate. This study is randomized, which means that participants will be randomly assigned to either starting Ondansetron from their diagnosis date or starting Ondansetron only if nausea and vomiting appears.

Ten hospitals across Canada are participating in the study, and the principal investigator is our very own Dr. Jaime Guzman. If you are about to start Methotrexate and are interested in participating in this study, please talk to any member of the rheumatology team!

## COVID Rheum Study

Last summer, families attending the Pediatric Rheumatology clinic were surveyed on the various ways that the COVID-19 pandemic affected their care. This study was conducted by one of our research students with Dr. Tucker, Dr. Houghton, and Dr. Tam. Of 97 recorded responses, 54% of parents reported a moderate, great, or extreme increase in concern for their child's disease or treatment due to the pandemic.

Patients living outside the Greater Vancouver area had a greater increase in virtual visits and a decrease in in-person visits when compared to those living within the Greater Vancouver area. About 17% of families reported difficulties obtaining medications and 31% reported limited access to healthcare. Additionally, 40% of children and youth reported an increase in emotional health concerns. These findings show that overall family concern of the COVID-19 pandemic has been high, when considering their child's rheumatic condition. The results of this study highlight the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on families with children living with rheumatic diseases.



# Winter Door Decorating Contest

The 2nd annual Winter door decorating contest took place on December 2021, and all of our physicians, nurses, fellows, research and administrative staff worked together to create their best Winter doors.

Here are a few that we wanted to share! Which is your favourite?

Do you want peace on earth?

Do you want COVID to go extinct?

... Or do you want to meet our Rheumatology elves?



## Hello and Goodbye!

Congratulations to [Dr. Andrea Human](#), one of our rheumatologists, and [Jennifer Brown](#), our occupational therapist, for becoming parents to new faces! A sad farewell to [Angelyne Rivera](#), our project manager of 11 years, who is continuing her contributions to research as a data manager at her new job. Goodbyes to [Kevin Chang](#), our research assistant, and [Sebastian Kondratowski](#), our co-op student. We wish all of you the best of luck in your future endeavors!

We are very excited to welcome [Else Bosman](#), our new research coordinator and data manager. Congratulations to [Martha Sieres](#) for becoming a full-time research assistant and [Madelynn Hutchinson](#) who joined us as a co-op student in January.

Welcome to the team everyone!

Lastly, we would like to remind all families to receive their COVID 19 vaccinations to help lower your risk of getting and spreading the virus. Stay safe, everyone!