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President's Message

Hope everyone is having a great summer!

My son Andrew (who is turning 12 end of August) and I have been having our annual set of summer road trips. We literally just get in the car and go. No planned hotel stays, tickets to events. We just go. Interests change, and my son is now heavily interested in music (ever heard of Nicky Youre? I had no knowledge of this dude prior to this summer), techy stuff, and now wants to live in the coastal So Cal cities so he can be near his favorite YouTubers. Grudgingly obliging his parents by doing a STEM camp, he and I set out for Northern California again, but this time went to Cupertino. Super thrilled to be there, for the first time in months, he didn't have to be told to smile for the camera. The photo shows us on the top deck of the Apple Park Visitor Center.

The only thing that is permanent is Change.

I just wanted to let everyone know that I am stepping out of the USSONAR Board come December 31, 2023. Minna Kohler will be the President as of January 1, 2024, with Jonathan Samuels as VP, Anthony Reginato as Secretary. Jane Nishio will be staying on as member-at-large. You might have already received an email from SRAHEC announcing a call for nominations for USSONAR Board Treasurer.

We will also have our Annual Business Meeting in San Diego on November 11. Everyone is invited to come. A registration sign up email will be forthcoming.

It's been one hell of ride, being on the board since 2017 (?), but especially the past 2 years being President. It took COVID to shake things up, as we adjusted to extremes of life – either in quarantine or immersed in the day to day hell of dealing with influxes of patients into our hospitals. This required a rapid adaptation 100% to virtual teaching for our Fundamentals program. It also gave time for many of us to do a lot of soul-searching to determine if what we are doing is worth it, and what to do with the rest of our lives. But post-COVID was a time of exploration. Do we stay virtual or go hybrid or full live?

I think for those of us who have been serving USSONAR in various capacities the last two years but especially the ones who have helped out with planning (eg. Fundamentals course, May Multi-Track conference, Corporate Relations committee) it's been one very big exploration into the unknown – trying new things, getting rid of what did not work, and improving on what worked. All I know is that I am just one small piece in this entire operation, and I am honored to have served USSONAR.



Karina Torralba, MD, MACM, RhMSUS, CCD President, USSONAR Board, Loma Linda University Health, Loma Linda, CA

Thanks to our sponsors!





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2023-2024 USSONAR Schedule of Events

August

23-24 Fundamentals Course Applications open

August 28 th	USSONAR Webinar Series Overview of MSK Imaging in Lupus - plus MSKUS in Lupus Dr Diane Mar, Stanford University/Palo Alto VA, Palo Alto, CA
September 11 th	USSONAR Webinar Series Incorporating SLE US into fellowship Teaching Dr Shereen Mahmood, Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein, Bronx, NY
September 18 th	USSONAR Webinar Series <u>ILD Screening with LUS</u> - <u>The</u> <u>Future of Early Disease Detection at the Point of Care</u> Dr. Robert Fairchild, Stanford University, Stanford, CA
September 25 th	USSONAR Webinar Series <u>Lupus Therapeutics: An Evolving</u> Paradigm Dr Karina Torralba, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, CA
October 2 nd	USSONAR Webinar Series <u>Tendon Disorders and Jaccoud's</u> <u>Arthropathy in SLE</u> Dr Karla Criner, UCLA, Los Angeles/Burbank, CA
October 16 th	USSONAR Webinar Series How Well Do Disease Activity Indices Study MSK Manifestations in Lupus? Dr Hulya Bukulmez, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH
November 11th	USSONAR Annual Business Meeting & Reception 2024 San Diego, CA. Details & registration to follow.
December 11 th	USSONAR Webinar Series <u>Ultrasound in Polymyalgia</u> Rheumatica
	Dr Minna Kohler, MGH/Harvard University, Boston, MA
January 8 th	USSONAR Webinar Series Controversies in Sjogren's Syndrome Ultrasound Dr Howard Yang, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA
January 8 th February 5 th	USSONAR Webinar Series Controversies in Sjogren's Syndrome Ultrasound

April - March	USSONAR Webinar Series RA/PsA/Gout SIG – pending
May 17 th - 19 th	2024 Multi-track Ultrasound in Rheumatology Conference with Hands-on Scanning, optional cadaveric lab.
June	Fundamentals Course Virtual Knowledge & Skills Assessment

Call for Nominations for USSONAR Board Treasurer

USSONAR is seeking nominations for the Treasurer position

Due to a vacancy on the USSONAR Board at the end of December 2023, USSOANR is seeking nominations for the Treasurer position. This term will run from January 1, 2024 to June 30, 2026. Eligibility for nomination requires that you are a full member of USSONAR.

Treasurer duties:

- Attend quarterly and ad hoc Board meetings (virtual)
- Be aware of and help present USSONAR's current cash flow after review with organizational administrator and make information available to the Board and members
- Assist in developing yearly Budget with administrator
- · Assist the Board in Fundraising
- Present the organization's financial status at the Annual Meeting
- Regularly review incoming funds and expenditures with the administrator
- Approve expenditures up to \$1000 deemed necessary for the organization's activities

USSONAR Board positions are typically 2-year terms. Each Board member automatically advances to the next position (Treasurer becomes the Secretary, then Vice President, then President) every 2 years.

Your application is due Thursday, Aug. 31 at 5 PM EST.

Online voting will be from September 5-18, 2023.

Click here to submit nominations



USSONAR Lupus SIG: LITES

The Lupus Special Interest Group of USSONAR is holding its first ever webinar series, the Lupus Imaging and Therapeutics Educational Series (LITES), a group of 5 webinars looking at a range of topics in the lupus space. You might think, what do these talks this have to do with ultrasound and imaging in general?

"You Can't Really Know Where You Are Going Until You Know Where You Have Been"

- Maya Angelou

Part of the objectives of the Lupus SIG is to foster common interests when it comes to the care of patients with SLE, and to explore the incorporation of ultrasound into Lupus management. Our group came up with this idea to come up with these talks as a way to explore various topics and lay a foundation for future studies and projects.

We will be starting off August 28 with Diane Mar who will be talking about the musculoskeletal (MSK) manifestations in Lupus with an overview of the current applications of MSK Lupus imaging. Shereen Mahmood will be talking about how she utilizes ultrasound into fellowship training as it applies to lupus management. Karina Torralba will be talking about the changes to the lupus therapeutic landscape over the past decade imaging has been used in current clinical trials to evaluate treatment response. Karla Criner will be talking about tendon involvement in SLE, and and will explore the advantages of ultrasound imaging in evaluating Jaccoud's arthritis in SLE. Hulya Bukulmez with Vaneet Sandhu will be wrapping up the series by October 16, looking at the MSK domains of various lupus disease activity indices and the recent advances looking into the incorporation of ultrasound into these measures.

You might notice there's a talk by Robert Fairchild in the middle of all of this. Always glad to have Robert's brilliance in our midst. He will be talking about the use of ultrasound in the evaluation of interstitial lung disease in connective tissue diseases. Robert is the head of the USSONAR ILD SIG.

There are other webinars taking place after October. Please see schedule for line up.

I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Karina Torralba/Vaneet Sandhu

University of Washington hosts North American Large Vessel Vasculitis Workshop

UW, spearheaded by Ingeborg Sacksen, launched its third LVV workshop last July 27-29 at the Graduate Hotel in Seattle, WA. Faculty included Wolfgang Schmidt (Germany), Lena Terslev (Denmark) and Andreas Diamatopoulos (Norway). Kudos to Ingeborg, Scott Pollock and Elizabeth Jernberg for holding this course!

Update of ACR Guidance on use of Ultrasound in Rheumatology

"ACR and USSONAR, are supporting an ongoing project that will eventually result in several manuscripts, which will be reviewed for endorsement."

The first and last published guidance was in 2012: McAlindon T, Kissin E, Nazarian L, Ranganath V, Prakash S, Taylor M, Bannuru RR, Srinivasan S, Gogia M, McMahon MA, Grossman J, Kafaja S, FitzGerald J. American College of Rheumatology report on reasonable use of musculoskeletal ultrasonography in rheumatology clinical practice. Arthritis Care Res (Hoboken). 2012 Nov;64(11):1625-40. doi: 10.1002/acr.21836. PMID: 23111854.

There are six projects under various stages of planning and implementation.

Guidance paper for Inflammatory arthritis (Rheumatoid arthritis and Psoriatic arthritis) and for Soft
Tissue Disorders and Procedures are currently in their Literature Review phases, after undergoing
Content Expert panel review of topics to be included. Subsequently Voting panels for each project will decide on the final statements.

Veena Ranganathan (UCLA), Gurjit Kaeley (UF-Jacksonville), and Catherine Bakewell (Intermountain Health, Salt Lake City) are spearheading the RA/PsA project while Myma Albayda (JHMI), Norman Madsen (URochester) and Karina Torralba (LLU) are spearheading the Soft Tissue/Procedures project.

Upcoming 2024 projects: Crystalline Arthropathies and Vasculitis

Upcoming 2025 projects: Sjogren's Syndrome and Pediatric Rheumatology

Save the date

USSONAR is pleased to announce the following presentations will be happening at ACR Convergence in San Diego – all of which emanate from work being done as part of USSONAR-sponsored events. Otherwise, we would like to hear from you -- If you are presenting your work at ACR – please let us know. We would like to support everyone's endeavors as much as possible. Moral support included!!! Email me at Torralba.karinamsus@gmail.com

Implications of the ACR Ultrasound Guidelines on Education Session: ACR Musculoskeletal Ultrasound Guideline Update for Soft Tissue Disorders and Procedures*

Speakers: Karina Torralba, Jemima Albayda, Norman Madsen

Moderator: Zineb Aouhab Monday November 13, 2023 8:00 AM – 9:00 AM (Approximate, please check final schedule)

Implications of the ACR Ultrasound Guidelines on Education Session: ACR Musculoskeletal Ultrasound Guideline Update for Inflammatory Arthropathies*

Speakers: Veena Ranganathan, Gurjit Kaeley, Catherine Bakewell

Moderators: Erin Chew, Anthony Reginato

November 12, 2023, Sunday 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

*ACR Board recently approved USSONAR to co-author on final manuscript



Janeth Yinh, MD, RHMSUS



Lily Kao, MD, RHMSUS



Fawad Aslam, MBBS, RHMSUS



Yih Chang Lin, MD

USSONAR successfully launched its first Multitrack conference in May 2023

The conference was a first for USSONAR and featured the following courses/tracks: Basic MSUS (Adult and Peds), Advanced Disease-Focused MSUS, Injection Course and UGSBy. Held at the Center for Advanced Simulation and Learning (CAMLS) of the University of South Florida, in Tampa, FL last May 17-19, the course had 68 attendees,10 exhibitors, and 32 live patient models.













2024 Conference/Course Planning Committee Members

We are currently in the midst of planning our activities for 2024. Things are shaping up with the help of our committee members.

- 2024 Fundamentals Mid Year Course Scientific Committee: Norman Madsen (URochester),
 Michelene Hearth-Holmes (UNebraska), Jen Medlin (UNebraska), Jonathan Samuels (NYU),
 Yih Chang Lin (USF-Tampa) and Jane Nishio (Walnut Creek, CA)
- 2024 Multi Track Conference Scientific Committee: MSK Track Janeth Yinh (MGH/Harvard), Fawad Aslam (Mayo Clinic-Arizona); Non-MSK Track Lily Kao (Stanford/Evergreen Clinic), Minna Kohler (MGH/Harvard), Myma Albayda (Johns Hopkins); Injection Course Janeth Yinh, Fawad Aslam; UGSBy course Ami Ben Artzi (Scripps/DelMar CA); Pediatrics Track -

Ed Oberle (Nationwide Children's); Yih Chang Lin

- August 2023 April 2024 USSONAR Webinar Series Scientific Chair, Funding/Grants Procurement - Karina Torralba (Loma Linda University)
- Finance/Funding tasks, and Corporate Relations Committee all USSONAR activities (Live courses/conferences, Virtual Programs (Image Bank, Journal Club): Karina Torralba and Catherine Bakewell (Intermountain Health-SLC)
- Logistics and US Machine Procurement for all courses/conferences: Karina Torralba and Jane Nishio







Clara Lin MD RhMSUS

Pediatric US Committee Launches Pilot Program for Basic MSUS Learning for Fellowship Programs

- Clara Lin (Colorado Children's Denver) and Deirdre De Ranieri (Lurie Children's Chicago)
 and their team launched this summer a Basic Pediatric MSUS training program
- The goal is to increase access and exposure to MSUS for Pediatric Rheumatology Fellowship Training Programs.
- The target audience are Pediatric Rheumatology fellows who are in need of MSUS exposure.that have no pediatric faculty teaching MSUS in the program.

- 8 programs were invited.
- 8 participants from 5 programs are currently enrolled

OTHER NEWS

- The USSONAR Pediatric Rheumatology Committee is also developing a pediatric ultrasound course to be led by Ed Oberle (Nationwide Children's - Cincinnati) in May 2024 in conjunction with other USSONAR course offerings
- Members of our group are actively working with Childhood Arthritis and Rheumatology Research Alliance (CARRA) on defining and scanning entheses in children
- Members of our group have also been involved in research with Robert Fairchild looking at US applications for Interstitial Lung Disease in pediatric rheumatology populations.



Ryan Jessee, MD, RhMSUS (Chair)

Members, Advocacy Committee Howard Yang, Shereen Mahmood, Christina Downey, Amanda Schnell

Advocacy Committee Updates

The proposed physician fee schedule was released in July, with important changes to musculoskeletal ultrasound, see the chart below for a brief synopsis of the numbers. Unfortunately, there is another 3.3% across the board cut for all reimbursement, although hopefully Congress will pass legislation to lessen this, as they have done in years past.

With regards to MSK ultrasound, it is helpful to recap the major changes last year where the work RVUs (which make up most of the professional component-26 modifier) were increased and practice expense RVUs (which make up nearly all of the technical component-TC modifier) were decreased resulting in an overall small total decrease.

Directly as a result of our campaign last year, CMS asked the RUC (Relative Value Update Committee) to re-examine the practice expenses as CMS was concerned reimbursement was underestimating the costs associated with performing MSK ultrasound. The RUC re-examined the technical component of 76881/76882 at their meeting earlier this year and ended up recommending a large increase (more

than triple) to the practice expense RVUs for 76882 only, with no change to 76881. The RUC and CMS both felt that radiologists, who are the primary utilizer of 76882, had additional practice expenses which were not currently taken into account.

Interestingly, this change would result in a total greater compensation for a limited exam compared to a complete exam. In coordination with other organizations, we have decided to advocate in favor of the increase to 76882 as proposed. If this change to the limited exam is enacted, then in the future we can use the argument of rank order anomaly to try to increase reimbursement for the complete exam. The current proposed increase to the limited exam would never have occurred without our advocacy campaign last year, so everyone is encouraged to remain active and engaged going forward.

Below are the numbers for the current year as well as the upcoming year (proposed). As you can see, there is no change to RVUs for 76881, although a slight decrease in dollar amounts due to the decreased conversion factor.

- For 76882, there is an increase for the TC from 0.28 to 0.93. Under the current proposed changes, a complete exam with no modifiers will reimburse approximately \$52.73 and an incomplete exam with no modifiers will reimburse approximately \$62.23.
- The total reimbursement dollar amounts will vary somewhat based on geographic distribution.

CPT ¹ /			Work	Non- Facility PE	Facility PE	Mal- Practice	Total Non-	Rough dollar
HCPCS	Mod	DESCRIPTION	RVUs ²	RVUs ²	RVUs ²	RVUs ²	Facility RVUs ²	amounts
Propose	ed 202	4						
76881		Us compl joint r-t w/img	0.90	0.66	NA	0.05	1.61	52.73
76881	TC	Us compl joint r-t w/img	0.00	0.32	NA	0.01	0.33	10.81
76881	26	Us compl joint r-t w/img	0.90	0.34	0.34	0.04	1.28	41.92
76882		Us Imtd jt/fcl evl nvasc xtr	0.69	1.16	NA	0.05	1.90	62.23
76882	TC	Us Imtd jt/fcl evl nvasc xtr	0.00	0.92	NA	0.01	0.93	30.46
76882	26	Us Imtd jt/fcl evl nvasc xtr	0.69	0.24	0.24	0.04	0.97	31.77
Establis	hed 2	023						
76881		Us compl joint r-t w/img	0.90	0.66	0.66	0.05	1.61	54.56
76881	TC	Us compl joint r-t w/img	0.00	0.32	0.32	0.01	0.33	11.18
76881	26	Us compl joint r-t w/img	0.90	0.34	0.34	0.04	1.28	43.48
76882		Us Imtd jt/fcl evl nvasc xtr	0.69	0.52	0.52	0.05	1.26	42.70
76882	TC	Us Imtd jt/fcl evl nvasc xtr	0.00	0.27	0.27	0.01	0.28	9.49
76882	26	Us Imtd jt/fcl evl nvasc xtr	0.69	0.25	0.25	0.04	0.98	33.21

Below is the link to provide feedback to CMS, just click on the blue comment button. We strongly encourage all members to type in a brief response indicating that you approve of the increase to musculoskeletal ultrasound reimbursement that is currently proposed. Comments must be made before September 11th. An example statement: "I am a practicing rheumatologist who frequently

utilizes musculoskeletal ultrasound. Under CMS-1784-P, I am happy to see that there is a proposed reimbursement increase for the limited musculoskeletal ultrasound exam (76882), and I am writing in support of this change. I hope that in the future the complete exam (76881) will be re-examined to ensure similar appropriate reimbursement."

https://www.regulations.gov/document/CMS-2023-0121-1282

Please contact Ryan Jessee (<u>rcjessee@gmail.com</u>) or the USSONAR board with any questions. Thank you for your help.



Norm Madsen, MD, MSc, BMBS, RhMSUS (Committee Chair))

Committee members: Michelene Hearth-Holmes, Jennifer Medlin, David Bulbin (Geisinger), Erin Chew (Vanderbilt), and Narandra Bethina (UVermont)"

Fundamentals Education Committee

The Fundamentals course for 2022-2023 was a success!

- 3904 studies were reviewed by 62 mentors/faculty
- 105 Applicants
- 55 Graduated, 47 Fellows, 8 Non-Fellows

To date:

- 511 Fellows Trained since 2009, 144 Rheumatology professionals (MD or APP) since 2011
- USSONAR is building a new LMS for the Fundamental Course, the expected launch date is for the 24.25 year.

Thank you to all our volunteer mentors! We do realize it takes about 20-30 minutes to provide feedback on one single scan so we are super grateful to everyone who has pitched in and <u>VOLUNTEERED</u> their time since 2007 for their dedication and commitment as teachers/faculty of the Fundamentals program. The board is currently reconfiguring budgets and financial lay-out of the Fundamentals program, with the aim to provide more support to our mentors who read scans throughout the year. More news to follow.

Here are our top mentors who have read more than 95 scans for the 2022-2023 Fundamentals course:

Norman Madsen	209
Janeth Yinh	200
Jay Higgs	200
Jon Arnason	200
Dan Malone	194
Jen Medlin	170
Michelene Hearth-Holmes	158
Eugene Kissin	156
Michael Wu	145
Elizabeth Russell	143
Charles Pritchard	137
Anthony Sidari	107
Amy Cannella	100
Lee Day	100
Midori Nishio	100
Dana Direnzo	96

Fundamentals Course 2023-2024

The fundamentals course remains a mainstay of USSONAR's offerings.

Course directors for 2023-2024 – for the second year in a row, Norman Madsen (UnivRochester) and Michelene Hearth-Holmes (UnivNebraska) with Jennifer Medlin (UnivNebraska) assisting.

Updates:

Applications for the 23-24 Fundamentals course cycle are open until Aug. 31. Learn more here: https://www.ussonar.org/training-program

Educational platform is being updated with the help of SRAHEC so that one unified platform is being utilized. We hope to forego the use of four different platforms as was the case before.

Videos showing the various techniques to ultrasound various joint regions is being done by Erin Chew (Vanderbilt University).

Curriculum updates being done are being done by Jennifer and Michelene. Michelene hopes to hand over the assistant chairship to Jennifer soon.

Contact Info:

Ultrasound School of North American Rheumatologists

14646 NW 151st Blvd, Alachua, FL 32615
ussonar@srahec.org

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This email was sent to nromero@srahec.org by ussonar@srahec.org

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