

USSONAR Summer Newsletter



July 2026

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A Message from the Outgoing President

Dear Ultrasound Friends,

As I conclude my term as President of the Ultrasound School of North American Rheumatologists (USSONAR), I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to serve this extraordinary organization. Looking back over the past 2.5 years, I am proud not only of what we have accomplished together, but also of the remarkable community of educators, mentors, volunteers, industry partners, and members who have made these achievements possible.



Minna Kohler MD, RhMSUS

USSONAR's mission has always been to advance ultrasound imaging in rheumatology by seamlessly integrating its use into daily clinical practice to deliver improved diagnostic capability and better patient outcomes. It has been a joy to see USSONAR work towards establishing a widespread, highly-skilled community of specialists through rheumatologic ultrasound education and research, and together we have continued to strengthen that mission. Our educational programs have flourished through the continued success and growth of our flagship Fundamentals of Musculoskeletal Ultrasound Program and the annual Multi-Track Ultrasound Conference, providing comprehensive educational pathways for learners from beginners to advanced practitioners.

Some of the most exciting updates during my presidency include:

- The modernization of our educational infrastructure by implementing Canvas as our learning management system, giving participants centralized access to course materials, assessments, and educational resources. At the same time, with the leadership of Dr. Phillip Chu (program director) and Dr. Erin Chew (associate program director), and board member Dr. Jane Nishio, the education committee and our expert faculty volunteers completed a comprehensive update of the USSONAR curriculum to ensure it remains current, standardized, and responsive to advances in rheumatologic ultrasound. We continue to update the public facing and members only websites to keep people updated

- The expansion of the USSONAR Webinar CME series which has served as a vital bridge for improving knowledge gaps between imaging pearls, innovative ideas and everyday point-of-care clinical practice.
- The growth of our membership (945+ strong), and steady annual expansion to include more participants in the Fundamentals of Musculoskeletal Ultrasound Program has brought new energy to USSONAR; we continue to support rheumatologists incorporating ultrasound into practice, increase our faculty educators/mentors, and develop our future ultrasound leaders.
- USSONAR has also strived to partner with the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) to:
 - Update ultrasound guidance documents for inflammatory arthritis, now under ACR board review
 - Increase visibility and emphasize the value of ultrasound through increased number of ultrasound research abstracts presented by USSONAR members at ACR; as well as research initiatives to advocate for ultrasound led by Dr. Robert Fairchild and the USSONAR research committee.
 - Optimize ACR fundamental musculoskeletal ultrasound and advanced rheumatologic ultrasound education courses led by USSONAR faculty
 - Submit an update of essential ultrasound knowledge for every rheumatology fellow via the ACR RhUS Mini-Curriculum, now under review.

As we get ready to start our 19th class of Fundamentals of MSKUS Program this fall, we hope to see many of you at our annual business meeting and reception. Stop by and also celebrate the exciting milestone of USSONAR hosting its first exhibit booth at the American College of Rheumatology Convergence in Orlando. Come volunteer at the booth and share the enthusiasm of ultrasound to new audiences to USSONAR, by connecting with colleagues from around the world, recruiting new members, and showcasing the value of musculoskeletal ultrasound education.

We are incredibly grateful for the increasing support from our industry sponsors, whose partnership allows us to enhance our educational offerings while maintaining our commitment to high-quality, unbiased education. And our valuable addition of Aviva Rothman as USSONAR's new Association Manager. Aviva has already brought tremendous enthusiasm and organization to USSONAR. I also want to thank our longstanding administrative support, SRAHEC, whose dedicated support has been essential to the success of every course, conference, and initiative.

As we continue to advocate for rheumatologic ultrasound, USSONAR remains committed to working closely with the American College of Rheumatology to ensure the continuation of the RhMSUS certification. This certification represents much more than a professional credential. It establishes a rigorous national standard for competency, demonstrates commitment to excellence, promotes lifelong learning, and provides patients and institutions with confidence that certified rheumatologists and APPs have achieved advanced expertise in musculoskeletal ultrasound. As ultrasound becomes increasingly integrated into rheumatology practice, preserving and strengthening the RhMSUS certification pathway remains one of USSONAR's highest priorities and we will continue to keep you updated on anticipated changes.

As one leadership team concludes its service, I am delighted to welcome our incoming officers:

- President: Jonathan Samuels, MD, RhMSUS (New York University)
- Vice President: Anthony M. Reginato, PhD, MD, RhMSUS (Brown University)
- Secretary: Catherine Bakewell, MD, RhMSUS (Intermountain Health)
- Treasurer: Ralf Thiele, MD, RhMSUS (University of Rochester)

I know their experience, vision, and dedication will continue to move USSONAR forward. I will remain on the board as immediate past-president and Dr. Jane Nishio will rotate off the board but will continue in her role as education committee advisor (and historical advisor to the board).

Serving as your President has been one of the greatest honors of my professional career. Thank you to our Board of Directors, committee chairs, faculty, reading mentors, industry partners, SRAHEC staff, and every volunteer who has contributed to our mission. Most importantly, thank you to our members for your trust, enthusiasm, and commitment to advancing point-of-care ultrasound in rheumatology.

It has been a privilege to serve as your President. I leave this role with tremendous optimism for USSONAR's future and confidence that our organization will continue to educate, innovate, advocate, and inspire the next generation of rheumatology ultrasound leaders.

With sincere gratitude,

Minna Kohler, MD, RhMSUS

Outgoing President

Ultrasound School of North American Rheumatologists (USSONAR)

2026 Course Highlights



2025–2026 Fundamentals Academic Year Recap

What a year it's been! We're proud to share some highlights from the USSONAR Fundamentals program and to celebrate the fellows and attendings who made this year such a success.

By the Numbers

This past academic year, we trained:

- **71 fellows** and **21 attendings** in the USSONAR Fundamentals program
- Including **10 pediatric fellows** and **6 pediatric attendings**
- **40 scholarships** awarded to fellows to attend our mid-year workshop in Tampa Bay, FL

Thank You! None of this happens without the dedication of our volunteers and committee members.

Special thanks to Michelle Mullins and Jane Nishio for their outstanding contributions this year.

Thank you to our Education Committee for their continued guidance and support: Jane Nishio, Jen Medlin, Samar Aboulain, Ed Oberle, Fawad Aslam, Janeth Vinh, Michelene Hearth-Holmes, and Ann Cameron Barr.

We're also grateful to the many hands that helped guide our **transition to Canvas** this year — a big step forward for the program. And a heartfelt thank-you to our **Mentors**, who together reviewed over **5,000 scans** this year. Your time and expertise are the backbone of this program!

Congratulations to Our Top Fellows and Attendings:

We're delighted to recognize the following fellows and attendings for their outstanding performance in completing the course this year:

Dale Kobrin
Lindsay Cho
Larabe Farrukh
Laura Nichols
Selim Demirdelen
Emily He
Javier Rios
Max Krall
Sam Lazaroff

Divya Sudireddy
Alec Yu
Neeharika Masarapu
Yumeko Kawano
Ujjwal Madan
Annabelle Guo
Jason Yang
Hayley Lynch

A special thank you to our top 10 scan reading mentors for their dedication:

Lily Kao
Phil Chu
Jon Arnason
Gene Kissin
Arash Mollaeian

Dan Malone
Amy Cannella
Prashant Kaushik
Narandra Bethina
Jen Medlin

Looking Ahead

We have exciting changes on the horizon, including a **redesign of our scan submission website**, aimed at making the process smoother and more intuitive for everyone. Stay tuned for more details in the coming months.

Thank you all for another wonderful year with USSONAR Fundamentals. We look forward to continuing to grow and improve together.

In May 2026, we successfully concluded the 4th annual USSONAR Multi-Track Ultrasound in Rheumatology Conference in Tampa, FL, bringing together 57 participants and 16 faculty across 3 concurrent tracks. We were thrilled to bring back the Pediatric Track this year as well as continue Vascular Education with special lecturer Dr. Valentin Schäfer from Germany! Many thanks to the course leadership:

- **Drs. Lily Kao and Zineb Aouhab**, leading the MSK Ultrasound Track
- **Dr. Ed Oberle**, dedicated Pediatric Ultrasound Track
- **Dr. Minna Kohler**, leading the Vasculitis and Sjögren's Ultrasound Track

Participants enjoyed high-quality instruction from faculty and ample time to practice ultrasound skills, including the opportunity to refine procedural techniques with two new ultrasound-guided injection models.

Overall, the conference showcased USSONAR's commitment to excellence in ultrasound education by combining expert instruction, cutting-edge training tools, and a collaborative learning atmosphere. The enthusiasm and engagement of both participants and faculty made this year's multi-track conference one of the most dynamic and rewarding yet.



Thank you to our 2026 Corporate Sponsors

Platinum

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Johnson & Johnson

The Sanofi logo, featuring the word "sanofi" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The dot on the "i" is a small purple circle.The Sobi logo, featuring an orange circle with three white dots inside, followed by the word "sobi" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below "sobi" is the tagline "rare strength" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

Gold



Silver

The Lilly logo, featuring the word "Lilly" in a red, cursive script font.

The 2026 USSONAR Corporate Sponsor Prospectus is available, including information about our 2026 events. [Learn more here.](#)

2026 USSONAR Schedule of Events



USSONAR Annual Business Meeting and Networking Reception

Join us Nov. 7th, 2026 | 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Join us at the renowned Rodizio Grill Brazilian Steakhouse, just a short walk from Orlando's Convention Center.



Members and nonmembers alike are invited to build new relationships, exchange ideas, and reconnect with colleagues from across the country.

Deadline to register: Oct. 31st, 2026

Join your mentors and colleagues at USSONAR's Annual Business Meeting and Networking Reception for an evening of fun! We'll have hors d'oeuvres and drinks for you to enjoy. Plus, the USSONAR Board of Directors will share updates on USSONAR past and present activities, leaving plenty of time for you to catch up with your friends and colleagues. We look forward to seeing you there!

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)



USSONAR is exhibiting for the **first time** at ACR Convergence this November! We recently sent out an email asking for volunteers to staff the booth and announcing our t-shirt design contest. Shifts are just one hour, so the time commitment is minimal. If you have not submitted your preferred day to volunteer, or your t-shirt design, please do so using the form linked below.

The deadline to submit the form is July 31, 2026.

 [Submit your design and volunteer availability here](#)

USSONAR's summer lineup is heating up! We have two webinars coming up in the weeks ahead. On **Monday, July 20th**, join us for a special presentation by Yaakov Levine, PhD, of SetPoint Medical. Then, on **August 10th**, we close out the 2026 Lupus Webinar Series with the fifth and final session. Mark your calendars, you won't want to miss either session.

Interested in becoming more involved with the USSONAR webinar program? We are looking for a new Webinar Director. If you're the person we're looking for, reach out to us and express your interest at ussonar@srahec.org.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)



Webinar Series

Monday, July 20th | 8:30 PM EST

Vagus Nerve-Mediated Neuroimmune Modulation: Translating Scientific Discovery to Therapeutic Approach for Rheumatoid Arthritis

SPEAKER:

Yaakov Levine, PhD

VP of Research, SetPoint Medical



USSONAR would like to recognize SetPoint Medical for sponsoring this webinar.

Final Session in the Lupus Webinar Series

Lupus Webinar Series: Lupus Myopathy and Muscle Ultrasound

August 10th, 2026 8:30 PM EST

SPEAKERS:

Eleni Tiniakou, MD

Myma Albayda, MD, RhMSUS



Committee Updates

Membership Committee: (Committee Chair- Dr. Zineb Aouhab)

We continue to focus on recruiting new members, particularly current fellows, by reaching out directly and through their program directors. We're also connecting with other professional societies to help spread the word about USSONAR. Our next committee meeting is scheduled for September 2026.

Advocacy Committee: (Committee Chair- Dr. Mark Matza)

USSONAR continues to engage with ACR to advocate for the continuation of RhMSUS certification. As details unfold, USSONAR will continue to keep you updated.

Research Committee: (Committee Chair- Dr. Robert Fairchild)

The USSONAR Research Committee is committed to supporting trainees and members in the development and advancement of ultrasound-related research. We welcome the opportunity to review study ideas and proposals at any stage and can provide guidance on study design, methodology, and implementation. For those interested in pursuing ultrasound-focused scholarship, the Committee also offers mentorship and can help connect members with collaborators and resources within the USSONAR community.

In parallel, the Committee is actively engaged in several faculty-led initiatives aimed at advancing the field. Current efforts include projects to quantify practicing ultrasonographers and ultrasound practice patterns across the United States, as well as work to better understand regional trends in global ultrasound research. These initiatives are intended to inform future research priorities and strengthen the evidence base supporting ultrasound use in clinical practice.

Media and Communications Committee: (Committee Chair- Dr. Mario Pompermayer)

The Communications Committee has been actively supporting USSONAR's educational mission through coordinated outreach, promotional communications, and member-facing content. Recent efforts have included coverage of the successful 2026 Multi-Track Ultrasound in Rheumatology Conference and ongoing communication regarding the ACR RhMSUS certification and recertification process. The committee also continues to highlight faculty, educational opportunities, and other USSONAR initiatives to help keep members informed and engaged.

Lupus SIG: (Committee Co-Chairs- Dr. Diane Mar and Dr. Hulya Bukulmez)

Planning and preparation are underway for this year's five-part Lupus Webinar Series, made possible by a generous educational grant from AstraZeneca. The series will begin on May 4, with additional dates and topics to be shared as they're finalized. The SLE SIG committee is actively seeking additional members for potential research initiatives.

We are always looking for new faces in our committees including Membership, Bylaws, Communications/ Media, Education and our Special Interest Groups!

Ready to Get Involved?

Email: ussonar@srahec.org with the subject line being which committee you are interested in

joining. We will direct your message to the correct Committee Chair.

Advocacy Committee

Committee Chair - Mark Matza, MD, MBA, RhMSUS

Advances USSONAR's advocacy efforts by promoting the value of rheumatology ultrasound and supporting initiatives that strengthen access, education, and appropriate use in clinical practice.

Bylaws Committee

Committee Chair - Natalie Faith, MD, RhMSUS, RMSK

Responsible for the review of the organizational bylaws including amendments, adoptions, and repeals.

Education Committee

Committee Co-Chairs - Lily Kao, MD, RhMSUS & Zineb Aouhab, MD, RhMSUS

Develop educational resources such as literature, image atlases, case studies, and discussion forums. Consists of a Fundamentals MSKUS Education subcommittee and Advanced Education subcommittee, which includes CME course planning and webinar program development.

Media and Communications Committee

Committee Chair - Mario Pompermayer, MD, RhMSUS

Engage community through organization's social media sites, organizational announcements, and our newsletter.

Membership Committee

Committee Chair - Zineb Aouhab, MD, RhMSUS

Maintaining membership database and recruitment of new members.

Pediatric Committee

Committee Chair - Ed Oberle, MD, RhMSUS

Promote training and education programs specific to the practice of pediatric rheumatic ultrasound. Committee members will be pediatric rheumatologists or USSONAR members with a specific interest in pediatric rheumatic ultrasound.

Research Committee

Committee Chair - Robert Fairchild, MD, PhD, RhMSUS

Oversee the research activities of the organization. Help create opportunities for interested rheumatologists to collaborate on research projects in the field of rheumatology ultrasound.

Are you interested in joining a special interest group?

Lupus US Special Interest Group- contact Hulya Bukulmez hxb38@case.com

Sjogren's/Salivary Gland US Special Interest Group- contact Howard Yang HHYang@mednet.ucla.edu

Vasculitis US Special Interest Group- contact Minna Kohler mkohler@mgh.harvard.edu

**We would like to
hear from you!**

If you have any updates, honors, or publications that you'd like to share with the USSONAR community, please send your information to ussonar@srahec.org. We'd love to review your submissions for inclusion in our upcoming newsletters!



Did you miss the latest Webinar Series session, *The Business of Ultrasound: Acquiring an Ultrasound Machine?*

[Catch up with the recording here.](#)

[View other previous webinars here.](#) Additional webinar topics and dates are forthcoming.



Membership Spotlight | By Dr. Zineb Aouhab

In this newsletter, we are putting the spotlight on Dr. Lily Kao.

Dr. Zineb Aouhab

1. How did MSK US impact your career as a rheumatologist?

Ultrasound is foundational to the way I practice, and it still brings me joy every day. My enthusiasm for ultrasound has only increased over time, and I have continued to learn new techniques and applications that I can then provide for my patients. I believe ultrasound education is vitally important as the sonographer rheumatologist community continues to grow. As such, I participate as a mentor in the USSONAR Fundamentals program and help organize hands-on training courses for USSONAR and ACR. I also serve on the Assessment Committee for the RMSK certification as the sole rheumatologist among ultrasound stakeholders, ensuring that our speciality is properly represented in musculoskeletal ultrasound standards.



Lily Kao, MD, RhMSUS

2. How did ultrasound training prepare you to practice rheumatology?

I was fortunate to go through the USSONAR training program during fellowship and benefit from the expertise of both remote and local mentors. The experience helped me see that ultrasound can often show pathology too subtle to detect by physical exam, and it can guide interventions much more precisely than palpation. I also saw how it saved patients from additional costly imaging or delays from yet more referrals. Ultrasound became an integral part of my workflow when I started practice, and it remains the highlight of my workday. Each ultrasound exam is a chance for me to ponder the anatomy and test my knowledge of pathology. Have I obtained the optimal view of the finding, and can I prove

that the finding supports the diagnosis? The process still fascinates me and keeps me curious and engaged.

3. What are some of the challenges you may have faced implementing ultrasound in your practice? How did you overcome them?

Since learning to scan for GCA, I have been looking to upgrade my machine to one that can better detect low flow. The challenge has been the cost of higher end machines compounded by reimbursement uncertainties from the lack of standardized codes for GCA ultrasound. Setting up an entirely new workflow and documentation also took time and effort. I also wonder whether my RMSK and RhMSUS certifications are sufficient proof of competency for an essentially vascular exam. These are growing pains of a new application coming into wider use, similar to setting up musculoskeletal ultrasound when I first started practice. Machine costs will likely decrease over time, but maintaining reimbursement remains an ongoing task that requires diligence and advocacy.

4. How do you imagine the future of MSK US?

My hope is that ultrasound becomes a core competency for every rheumatologist. I am gratified to see the excitement that fellows have for ultrasound, and I am optimistic that the field will continue to grow. As more trained sonographer rheumatologists go into practice, we now have a stronger voice than ever to advocate for the value we provide to our patients.



Contact Info:

Ultrasound School of North American
Rheumatologists
14646 NW 151st Blvd, Alachua, FL 32615
ussonar@srahec.org
386-518-2797

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