Electronic clinical data collection presents enormous opportunities for advancing the science and practice of medicine, including patient-centered outcome research (PCOR), says S. Louis Bridges Jr, MD, PhD, director of the UAB Division of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology. Supported by a growing evidence base, the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) has recommended quantitative measures of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) disease activity in routine practice. "This recommendation has translated into a greater emphasis on ‘treat-to-target’ treatment strategies that have been shown to improve RA patient outcomes," says Jeffrey Curtis, MD, MS, MPH, director of the division’s Arthritis Clinical Intervention Program. "However, there are many barriers to consistent, systematic data capture, including time and workflow issues and the availability and ease-of-use of health technology."
The UAB Lupus Clinic: Caring for the Complexities of SLE

Established over 30 years ago, the UAB Lupus Clinic offers patients access to state-of-the-art therapies for the treatment of lupus, education programs, and counseling to assist patients in the understanding of their disease and offer them the opportunity to participate in genetic, translational science, and clinical outcomes research.

Led by W. Winn Chatham, MD, professor of medicine and Lewis W. Hall Clinic Scholar in Rheumatology, the clinic is staffed by several faculty members and two nurse practitioners with extensive experience in the care of patients with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). The clinic maintains a collaborative care arrangement with consultants in Pulmonary Medicine, Cardiology, Nephrology, and Dermatology, providing appointment coordination for patients requiring evaluation from physicians in these specialties. The Lupus Clinic also assists in the management of lupus patients during pregnancy, in cooperation with the Division of Maternal-Child Medicine's high-risk pregnancy and complications clinic.

Lupus-specific templates are used to enter data into the UAB Health System's electronic medical record, allowing providers to efficiently track and evaluate patients' disease manifestations and responses to treatment. The UAB Lupus Clinic has provided a forum for research in understanding the genetics of SLE and immunologic mechanisms of disease.

More than two-dozen investigators have ongoing collaborations with Lupus Clinic physicians to elucidate the genetic basis and cause of lupus and identify potential new targets for treatment.

In the past decade, the UAB Lupus Clinic has been a site for clinical trials, evaluating more than 10 new lupus therapies. UAB was the site for the initial trials to assess the efficacy and safety of Belimumab (BLISS), a monoclonal antibody approved in 2011 for the treatment of lupus.

Other national and multinational studies include clinical trials of antibodies to interferon-alpha, anti-CD22 antibodies (epratuzumab), and other B-lymphocyte regimens. As a member of the Immune Tolerance Network as well as the Lupus Nephritis Trials Network, the UAB Lupus Clinic also provides lupus patients with nephritis the opportunity to participate in protocols to determine optimal management.

To make referrals, call 1-800-822-8116 or email whchatham@uab.edu.

At the Rheumatology/Dermatology Interface

There is substantial overlap in the clinical and pathological features of rheumatic diseases and skin diseases. For example, skin findings are typically prominent in systemic lupus erythematosus and dermatomyositis, and arthritis may accompany dermatologic disorders such as psoriasis.

At the forefront of this intersection of skin and rheumatic diseases is Henry Townsend, MD, assistant professor of medicine, who sees patients at the UAB Highlands Rheumatology Clinic. Townsend manages a large number of RA patients, including many with psoriatic arthritis, and sees patients at the UAB Kirklin Clinic and the UAB Musculoskeletal Ultrasound Program.

Contact: Cheryl Hardin, 205.934.2981.

Kunkel Award

Jeffrey Linthicum, MD, MS, MPH, associate professor of medicine and epidemiology in the Division of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology, is the 2012 recipient of the Henry Kunkel Young Investigator Award from the American College of Rheumatology.

The award is given to a physician scientist aged 45 or under who has made outstanding independent contributions to basic or clinical research in the field of rheumatology. Linthicum is the first UAB faculty member and first UAB fellow to be awarded this honor, which is given to one laboratory-based and one clinical investigator annually.

Randall is an internationally recognized rheumatologist. His current research projects include the effect of belimumab on immune function and the optimal use of this new existing development.

The Howard and Martha Holly Research Prize Awarded to Wolfgang Gross

Wolfgang Gross, MD, PhD, professor of internal medicine at the University of Lübeck, director of the Lübeck Department of the Rheumatology, and head of the Lübeck Department of the Rheumatology, and director of the Rheumatology, and head of the Rheumatology, and head of the Department for Rheumatology and Immunology in Bad Bramstedt, was awarded the Howard and Martha Holly Research Prize on August 1. Gross is a world leader in research in vasculitis, particularly granulomatosis with polyangiitis (Wegener’s granulomatosis). During his visit to UAB, he provided an update during Medical Grand Rounds and at Rheumatology Grand Rounds.

Koopman Honored at Dinner

William Koopman, MD, distinguished professor and chair emeritus of the UAB Department of Medicine and former director of the Division of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology, was honored at a dinner held at 5:30 p.m. on October 17 at the firm’s 57th Annual Lowe Conference on Rheumatic Diseases. Among his many accomplishments, he was the recipient of the 2011 American College of Rheumatology Presidential Gold Medal and was named the 2012 Laureate of the American College of Physicians (Alabama Chapter).

New Physicians

On July 1, 2012, the UAB Department of Medicine welcomed five new physicians.

Angela Gaffo, MD, MPhil, has joined UAB as assistant professor of medicine after completing an internal medicine residency and rheumatology fellowship at UAB. Her clinical interests include vasculitis and gout. Gaffo was a patient at The Kirklin Clinic and at the Birmingham VA Medical Center.

Archania Jain, MD, has joined UAB as assistant professor of medicine. She completed an internal medicine residency at St. Francis Hospital in Evanston, Illinois, where she served as chief medical resident. She completed a rheumatology fellowship at UAB and sees patients at The Kirklin Rheumatology Clinic and the UAB Highlands Rheumatology Clinic.

Iris Newton, MD, has joined UAB as assistant professor of medicine. She completed a residency in internal medicine at the Baptist Health System in Birmingham and a rheumatology fellowship at UAB. She sees patients at The Kirklin Rheumatology Clinic.

Jeffrey Linthicum, MD, MPH, has joined the division as assistant professor of medicine and epidemiology in the Division of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology.

New Physician: Angela Gaffo, MD, MPhil

New Physician: Archania Jain, MD

New Physician: Iris Newton, MD

New Physician: Jeffrey Linthicum, MD, MPH

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Archana Jain, MD, has joined UAB as assistant professor of medicine. She completed an internal medicine residency at St. Francis Hospital in Evanston, Illinois, where she served as chief medical resident. She completed a rheumatology fellowship at UAB and sees patients at The Kirklin Rheumatology Clinic and the UAB Highlands Rheumatology Clinic.

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