American College of Rheumatology Research and Education Foundation-ASP-Junior Career Development Award in Geriatric Medicine

Award Recipient:

Tracy Nguyen-Oghalai, MD
University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston

Project:
The Impact of Arthritis on Stroke Recovery

Mentorship Team:
Emilio Gonzalez, MD   James Goodwin, MD

Kenneth Ottenbacher, PhD

Starting in 2002, Medicare reimbursement for rehabilitation hospitalization changed from a fee-for-service system to a prospective payment system (PPS) based on case-mix groups. PPS allows for higher payment based on comorbidities, but osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis are not among those comorbidities that triggers increased reimbursement. Joint pain and swelling, common in these two conditions, are known to interfere with activities of daily living and are likely to interfere with strengthening and range of motion exercises for stroke rehabilitation. The functional recovery of hospital patients with osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis may be delayed, and length of rehabilitation might be longer and more costly.

In this proposal, I seek to determine the impact of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis on functional recovery from stroke. I hypothesize that osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis significantly delay this recovery and that the influence of age on this impact is significant. I propose to perform a retrospective analysis of a large national registry of standardized information on medical rehabilitation inpatients in the United States. Findings from this study will help clarify the impact of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis on functional recovery from stroke and have direct implications for Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement policy.

The American College of Rheumatology Research and Education Foundation-ASP Junior Career Development Award in Geriatric Medicine will allow me dedicated time to further my training in geriatrics and clinical sciences. My long-term career goal is to become a clinician-scientist with expertise in health outcomes research. To achieve my long-term goal, I need more training in research using large databases. The following short-term goals are means to achieve my long-term career objective:

1. To develop competency in health outcome research using a large database, I plan to acquire the formal training, skills, and experience necessary to conduct health out comes research using a national database. I am currently enrolled in the PhD program in the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health at University of Texas Medical Branch. In addition, my research projects will provide me with experience using a large national database.

2. To further my training in geriatric medicine, I plan to attend weekly lecture series in clinical gerontology, geriatrics grand rounds, and formal classes (e.g. "Aging and Health"). I will develop an outpatient clinic in geriatrics and rheumatology, which has the practical advantage of increasing access to rheumatology care for older persons who may have difficulty arranging for transportation to separate geriatric and rheumatology clinics. My primary mentor, James Goodwin, MD, will also staff the clinic, providing me with valuable training in geriatrics. Also, the annual meetings of the American Geriatrics Society will provide me with a unique opportunity to learn geriatric medicine and to network with researchers in aging.