

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

**Award Recipient:
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Yale University School of Medicine**

**Project:
“Epidemiology of Restricting Back Pain in
Older Adults”**



Una E. Makris, MD

Rheumatologists, geriatricians, and general internists, among other healthcare providers, see many older persons with back pain. Yet, treatment planning is difficult because data related to the clinical course and prognosis of back pain in this population is limited. Understanding the clinical course of back pain is required for clinicians to communicate prognostic information to patients, prescribe appropriate treatment, and prevent the onset or recurrence of back pain.

The overall objective of this research project is to evaluate the epidemiology of restricting back pain--back pain severe enough to restrict activity--among community-living older persons. To achieve this objective, my research team will: 1) elucidate the epidemiology of restricting back pain by evaluating its clinical course and determining how the clinical course differs based on demographic and clinical characteristics; and 2) evaluate the longitudinal relationship between episodes of restricting back pain and new or increasing disability in activities of daily living and mobility.

Through support from the American College of Rheumatology Research and Education Foundation (ACR REF)-ASP Junior Career Development Award in Geriatric Medicine, I will use data from the Yale University's Precipitating Events Project (PEP) to accomplish the project objective. In particular, we propose to analyze the information gathered on a unique and highly innovative sub-cohort

of the PEP study, which includes 550 initially nondisabled community-living persons, who are aged 70+ years and reported no restricting back pain at baseline. Over the course of 11 years, PEP participants completed monthly assessments of restricting back pain and disability, participated in comprehensive, home-based assessments at 18-month intervals, and, on average, received a follow-up of 107 months.

The proposed research will be the first of its kind to thoroughly evaluate the epidemiology of back pain in older persons. The results from this project will ultimately provide clinicians, patients, and families with high quality, evidence-based data that will facilitate age-appropriate discussions and decisions regarding the prognosis, treatment, and prevention of back pain, as well as planning for the potential need for public health resources.

Support from my ACR REF-ASP award and from my mentorship team will allow me to gain the skills necessary to become an independent clinical investigator with a specific interest in rheumatic conditions that affect older persons.