

New ANRF Scholars Drive Research Forward to Improve Lives of Rheumatology Patients

With expanded mechanisms and long-term impact, ANRF renews commitment to breakthrough, patient-focused science.

IRVINE, CA, UNITED STATES, July 10, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Arthritis National Research Foundation (ANRF) continues to lead the way in supporting the next generation of scientific talent with the announcement of its [2025-2026 ANRF Scholars](#). With expanded grant offerings and an unwavering

commitment to early-career investigators, ANRF is actively investing in high-impact research that brings us closer to cures and improved care for patients living with arthritis and related autoimmune diseases.



2025 - 2026 ANRF Scholars

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We're meeting a national need with action, ensuring that innovative research doesn't stall at the start of a promising career. These scholars represent the best of what's next in arthritis research.”

Emily Stormoen, ANRF CEO

“ANRF is answering the moment by stepping forward,” said Emily Stormoen, CEO of ANRF. “We're meeting a national need with action, ensuring that innovative research doesn't stall at the start of a promising career. These scholars represent the best of what's next in arthritis research and patient care, and we're honored to be part of their journey.”

Each year, ANRF's renowned Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) which includes leaders in the field, many of whom were once ANRF grantees, completes a rigorous review process to identify and support the most promising projects in

rheumatology and autoimmune disease. These efforts have yielded powerful results: [98% of ANRF scholars](#) remain in research, making meaningful contributions that advance discovery toward real-world therapies for patients.

“Every application is reviewed with care, curiosity, and high scientific standards,” said Craig

Walsh, PhD, Chair of the ANRF Scientific Advisory Board. “We fund work that pushes boundaries, and we know firsthand how transformational this support can be. Our scholars go on to shape the field, from foundational discoveries to clinical breakthroughs.”

This year, 20 first and second-year scholars are conducting research in a broad range of diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, juvenile idiopathic arthritis, osteoarthritis, psoriatic arthritis, scleroderma, and spondyloarthritis. Their work is exploring the deepest mechanisms of autoimmunity, pioneering tools for precision immunology, and illuminating new pathways for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, research that holds real promise for improving patients’ lives.

ANRF’s 2025–2026 grantmaking is made possible through the generous support of individual donors and institutional partners. Funding was awarded through multiple mechanisms: the Arthritis and Related Autoimmune Disease Research Grant, providing \$250,000 over two years; Psoriatic Arthritis Research Grants supported by Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine and Bristol Myers Squibb, at \$125,000; the new Rheum for Kids: Pediatric Joint and Skin Disease Research Grant, offered in collaboration with PeDRA - a powerful partnership that combines the reach and rigor of two national networks; and the new ANRF Postdoctoral Clinical Research Fellowship, a one-year, \$50,000 grant aimed at launching outstanding postdoctoral clinicians into independent research careers supported by AbbVie and Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine.

We are deeply grateful to our supporters and partners for making this critical investment in arthritis research. Their support funds discovery and shapes the future of care for millions living with autoimmune and inflammatory diseases.

2025–2026 ANRF Scholars

First-Year Scholars

- Sokratis Apostolidis, MD, University of Pennsylvania

Research focus: Autoimmune

- Satomi Arimoto, DDS, PhD, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Research focus: Psoriatic Arthritis – Bristol Myers Squibb Psoriatic Arthritis Fellow

- Yuriy Baglaenko, PhD, Cincinnati Children's Medical Center

Research focus: Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis

- Samuel Dowling, MD, PhD, Ann & Robert Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

ANRF Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

Research focus: Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis

- Megan Hanlon, PhD, Harvard Medical School

Research focus: Rheumatoid arthritis – Gale “Morrie” Granger Fellowship

- Nikhil Jiwrajka, MD, University of Pennsylvania

Research focus: Scleroderma

- Sivakanthan Kasinathan, MD, PhD, Stanford University

Research focus: Lupus

- Alexander Knights, PhD, Washington University in St. Louis

Research focus: Osteoarthritis

- Hailyn Nielsen, MD, PhD, University of California, San Francisco

Research focus: Autoimmune

- Laura Polivka, MD, PhD, MSc, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

Rheum for Kids: Pediatric Joint and Skin Disease Research Grant in collaboration with PeDRA

Research focus: Scleroderma

- Jimin Tan, PhD, New York University School of Medicine

Research focus: Psoriatic Arthritis – Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine PsA Fellowship

- Joy Um, MD, Washington University in St. Louis

ANRF Postdoctoral Research Fellowship

Research focus: Spondyloarthritis

- Priyanka Verma, PhD, University of Michigan

Research focus: Scleroderma

Second-Year Scholars

- Robert Corty, MD, PhD, Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Research focus: Autoimmune – Elizabeth D. Mellins Memorial Fellowship

- Ayano Kohlgruber, PhD, Boston Children's Hospital

Research focus: Rheumatoid arthritis

- Somanathapura K. NaveenKumar, PhD, University of Michigan Medical School

Research focus: Lupus

- Jeremy Tilstra, MD, PhD, University of Pittsburgh

Research focus: Lupus

- Chia-Lung Wu, PhD, University of Rochester Medical Center

Research focus: Osteoarthritis

- Hongxu Xian, PhD, UC San Diego

Research focus: Lupus

- Xinbo Yang, PhD, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Research focus: Spondyloarthritis

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