

**AMERICAN COLLEGE OF RHEUMATOLOGY
AND
ASSOCIATION OF RHEUMATOLOGY HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

POSITION STATEMENT

SUBJECT: Multidisciplinary Care for Patients with Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases
The Rheumatology Health Care Team

PRESENTED BY: American College of Rheumatology
Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals

FOR DISTRIBUTION TO: Members of the American College of Rheumatology
Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals
Medical Societies
Managed Care Organizations/Third Party Carriers
Members of Congress

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2 **BACKGROUND:**

3 Rheumatic diseases are often complex and affect many aspects of a person's life. Effective
4 management and best outcomes require access to a diverse group of health professionals or a
5 rheumatology health care team. Appropriate multidisciplinary care provides a coordinated
6 program of medications, education, physical and occupational therapy, counseling and
7 vocational support, and when needed, surgery to manage the disease, relieve pain, and maintain
8 optimal function and quality of life.

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10 Best outcomes occur when the rheumatology health care team, in collaboration with the patient,
11 evaluates that individual's health status, response to treatment, and optimizes the management
12 plan on a regular basis. The role of the rheumatologist in this care is to provide a diagnosis,
13 develop a treatment plan, and take an active role with other health professionals to manage the
14 patient's physical, psychological, and social functioning. Multidisciplinary care addresses
15 comprehensive therapeutic goals that are meaningful to the patient. Due to the chronic nature of
16 rheumatic diseases, patients require access to the rheumatology health care team in order to
17 effectively help manage their disease.

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19 This is also true for children with rheumatic diseases. They are vulnerable to delays in physical
20 and psychosocial development leading to greater risk of disability and unemployment as adults.
21 Multidisciplinary health care is able to address these issues improving quality of life as well as
22 reducing the financial burden on society.

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25 **POSITION:**

- 26 • The American College of Rheumatology and the Association of Rheumatology Health
27 Professionals, a division of the American College of Rheumatology, support timely and
28 affordable access to multidisciplinary care and rehabilitation services for patients with
29 rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases.

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- Appropriate care from a variety of disciplines, in the form of a rheumatology health care team, is efficacious in achieving outcomes and reducing disability.
 - The American College of Rheumatology and the Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals are opposed to efforts to restrict the access of individuals with rheumatic disease to rheumatologists and other health care professionals.

Board Approval Dates: 3/03, 8/07, 08/11