

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

POSITION STATEMENT

SUBJECT: Interdisciplinary Care for Patients with Rheumatic and
Musculoskeletal Diseases by 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
Other interested parties

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2 **POSITIONS**

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4 1. The American College of Rheumatology and the Association of Rheumatology Health
5 Professionals, a division of the American College of Rheumatology, support timely and
6 affordable access to interdisciplinary care and rehabilitation services for patients with rheumatic
7 and musculoskeletal diseases.
8 2. Appropriate care from a variety of disciplines, in the form of a rheumatology health care team, is
9 efficacious in achieving outcomes and reducing disability.
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11 3. The American College of Rheumatology and the Association of Rheumatology Health
12 Professionals are opposed to efforts to restrict the access of individuals with rheumatic disease to
13 rheumatologists and other health care professionals.
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16 **BACKGROUND**

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18 Rheumatic diseases are often complex and affect many aspects of a person's life. Effective management
19 and best outcomes require access to a diverse group of health professionals or a rheumatology health care
20 team. Appropriate interdisciplinary care provides a coordinated program of medications, education,
21 physical and occupational therapy, counseling and vocational support, and when needed, surgery to
22 manage the disease, relieve pain, and maintain optimal function and quality of life.
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24 Best outcomes occur when the rheumatology health care team, in collaboration with the patient, evaluates
25 that individual's health status, response to treatment, and optimizes the management plan on a regular
26 basis. The role of the rheumatologist in this care is to provide a diagnosis, develop a treatment plan, and
27 take an active role with other health professionals to manage the patient's physical, psychological, and
28 social functioning. Interdisciplinary care addresses comprehensive therapeutic goals that are meaningful
29 to the patient. Due to the chronic nature of rheumatic diseases, patients require access to the rheumatology
30 health care team in order to effectively help manage their disease.
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32 This is also true for children with rheumatic diseases. They are vulnerable to delays in physical and
33 psychosocial development leading to greater risk of disability and unemployment as adults.

34 Interdisciplinary health care is able to address these issues improving quality of life as well as reducing
35 the financial burden on society.
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Board Approval Dates: 3/03, 8/07, 08/11, 08/15