



What Is A Rheumatologist? A Physician Who Treats Arthritis, Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Conditions

What is a rheumatologist?

A rheumatologist is a doctor who treats arthritis and other diseases of the joints, muscles, and bones. Some rheumatologists also conduct research to determine the cause of diseases and find better treatment options for these disabling and sometimes fatal diseases.

What training does a rheumatologists have?

Rheumatologists receive four years of medical school, three years of training in either internal medicine or pediatrics and an additional two to three years in specialized rheumatology training.

What diseases do rheumatologists treat?

Rheumatologists treat arthritis, certain autoimmune diseases, musculoskeletal pain disorders and osteoporosis. There are more than 100 types of these diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, gout, lupus, back pain, osteoporosis, fibromyalgia and tendonitis. Some of these are very serious diseases that can be difficult to diagnose and treat.

Rheumatologists are “cognitive specialists.” What are “cognitive specialists”?

Cognitive specialists are physicians who have expertise in treating patients with complex medical conditions and who primarily provide evaluation and management services to patients. Patients referred to rheumatologists require expertise which primary care physicians are not trained to diagnose or determine an appropriate treatment plan.

Rheumatologists are specially trained to do the detective work necessary to discover the cause of swelling and pain. It's important to determine a correct diagnosis early so that appropriate treatment can begin. Because some rheumatic diseases are complex, and often change or evolve over time, rheumatologists work closely with patients to identify the problem and design an individualized treatment program.

Rheumatologists are experts in their field.

Rheumatologists typically act as a consultant to advise another physician about a specific diagnosis and treatment plan. In other situations, the rheumatologist manages complex patients relying upon the help of skilled professionals including nurses, physical and occupational therapists, psychologists and social workers. Team work is important, since musculoskeletal disorders are chronic.

Rheumatologists provide high quality care, often at a lower cost.

A rheumatologist is specially trained analyze the medical history and physical examination. Proper tests, a prompt diagnosis and specially tailored treatment results in improved patient outcomes, better quality care and is often less costly.

The ACR encourages Congress to recognize the value of rheumatology care.

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