Anchored in Excellence

AGENDA

All sessions will be in Intracoastal Ballroom, unless otherwise noted. All times listed in Eastern Standard Time (EST).
Virtual attendees: Please note that you will have a slightly modified agenda. Please refer to the virtual platform for your schedule.

THURSDAY, **JULY 30, 2026**

7:00 AM — **Registration Opens** *Intracoastal Foyer*

8:30 AM-8:45 AM

Welcome
Sadie Larson, Executive Director
Teri Puhalsky, BSN, RN, CRNI, RNS Board President

8:45 AM-9:40 AM

Reproductive Health Pearls for Rheumatic Patients
Cuoghi Edens, MD, FAAP

9:45 AM-10:40 AM

Beyond Dryness: Neurological Clues and Emerging Therapies in Sjögren's Disease
Wendy Simmons, PA-C
This session will explore Sjögren's disease beyond classic sicca symptoms, with a focus on neurological manifestations and their implications for diagnosis, monitoring, and treatment planning. Faculty will review how neurologic involvement may present across patients with Sjögren's disease and discuss practical considerations for comprehensive assessment and multidisciplinary care. As new therapies and treatment approaches continue to emerge, this session will also examine the evolving therapeutic landscape and what these advances may mean for clinical practice. Attendees will gain timely insight to support informed decision-making and individualized care for patients with complex, multisystem Sjögren's disease.

10:45 AM-11:25 AM — **Exhibit Hall Opens** *Grand Ballroom*

11:45 AM-12:45 PM

Lunch Product Theater - *Sponsored by UCB*
Unveiling New Evidence in PsA Joint Efficacy
Lynette Nicholson, PA-C, MMS

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BREAKOUT SESSION 1

1:00 PM-1:45 PM

Little Patients, Big Differences: A Pediatric Perspective for Adult Providers
Amanda Karam, DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC
This "Pediatrics for Adults" session will be led by pediatric nurse practitioner and will offer a candid, practical look at how rheumatic diseases differ across the age spectrum. Designed from a pediatric perspective, this session will highlight what pediatric providers want adult-focused clinicians to understand when evaluating and managing patients with rheumatic disease. Through a clinically grounded discussion, attendees will gain insight into key differences in presentation, disease behavior, and overall approach to care, helping bridge the gap between pediatric and adult rheumatology practice.

Infusing Care: Biologics at a Glance *Atlantic IV*
Virginia Vecchio, MBA, BSN, RN, CPN
This session will provide a practical overview of infusion therapy in pediatric rheumatology, with a focus on biologic medications commonly used to manage autoimmune and inflammatory disease. Learners will review key infusion therapies, safety and monitoring considerations, infection risk, vascular access, and management of infusion reactions across pediatric patient populations. Through real-world clinical insight, attendees will also explore the unique patient and family experience associated with long-term infusion care, including communication, education, workflow coordination, and strategies to support trust and treatment adherence. Designed for nurses and advanced practice providers, this session will highlight best practices that support safe, effective, and compassionate pediatric infusion care.

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THURSDAY, **JULY 30, 2026** *(continued)*

BREAKOUT SESSION 2

1:55 PM-2:40 PM

Prior Authorizations: Navigating Access and Advocacy *Atlantic IV*

Katie Taylor, CMPM, CRH-c, CRMS & Tiffany Tsosie, SHRM-CP

This session will provide an overview of the prior authorization processes for rheumatology medications. You will receive information on what a prior authorization is, why it is required, how the process works, how long it takes, and what comes next to ensure that your patient receives the therapy prescribed by the provider. You will learn how to distinguish which benefit each therapy is accessed through, including where to start, how to submit requests, how to check status, file appeals, and draft letters of medical necessity. Once a therapy is approved, that does not always mean it will be paid for—we will provide a brief overview of best-practice tips for identifying patient affordability options and aligning with available resources so that cost is not a barrier to care.

The APRN Playbook: Navigating Career Growth, Practice, and Leadership Realities

Christopher Title, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC

This APRN-focused mentorship session offers an honest, real-world look at navigating the many transitions that occur across an APRN career. Drawing on experience as a clinician, practice owner, and employer, the session will address topics such as career progression, compensation and negotiation, collaborative practice agreements, and managing evolving practice expectations.

Designed to be practical and approachable, this session will provide guidance, perspective, and actionable takeaways to help APRNs make confident, informed decisions, whether early in practice or considering their next professional step.

2:30 PM-3:30 PM **Exhibit Hall Snack Break** *Grand Ballroom*

3:30 PM-4:25 PM

Growing Up With JIA: A Pediatric Perspective from Clinic to Real Life

Shelby Jones, MSN, APRN, CPNP-PC, Kara Schiavone Moates, MSN, BS, RN, & Ellanora Moates

This session will explore juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) through both a clinical and lived-experience lens. Topics will include pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment considerations, alongside the real-life impact of JIA on children and families. Ellanora, a pediatric patient diagnosed at one year of age, and her mother, Kara, will share their journey to provide meaningful patient and family perspectives. By integrating clinical insight with lived experience, this session will emphasize the importance of shared decision-making and patient-centered pediatric rheumatology care.

4:30 PM-5:00 PM

20 Helpful Herbs for the Rheumatology Patient

Iris Zink, MSN, APRN, ANP-BC

We will be discussing 20 helpful simple herbs that the rheumatology patient may try to help with a variety of symptoms that may affect the rheumatology patient. We will discuss the 4 herbs that the autoimmune patients should never take as they can worsen the immune system response. We will briefly discuss complementary and alternative medicine and integrative medicine and simple suggestions that a rheumatology nurse can suggest as ultimately, food is medicine and herbs have been used for more than three thousand years for their medicinal benefit.

5:15 PM-7:00 PM

The President's Opening Poster Reception: Rheumaritaville *Intracoastal Foyer*

Unwind in Rheumaritaville: where science meets celebration. Join colleagues from across the country for an evening on the water featuring tropical cocktails, steel drum music, and a vibrant, relaxed atmosphere. While you sip your piña colada, explore innovative scientific posters and connect with peers, presenters, and leaders in rheumatology nursing. This signature event blends meaningful learning with unforgettable networking, because you've earned it!

7:00 PM-9:00 PM

Sip, String, & Socialize

Relax, unwind, and get creative at this hands-on social experience designed to bring attendees together. Join your fellow rheumatology nurses for an evening of jewelry making, where you'll sip your favorite drink, string your own custom piece, and connect with new and familiar faces. Whether you come for the creativity, the conversation, or the camaraderie, this laid-back event is the perfect way to build meaningful connections and make something special to take home.

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FRIDAY, **JULY 31, 2026**

8:00 AM — **Breakfast Buffet Opens**

8:15 AM-9:15 AM

Breakfast Product Theater - *Sponsored by Keenova Therapeutics*
Navigating the Landscape of RA: A Case Based Approach
Britini Saint John, MSN, APRN, FNP-C

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9:30 AM-10:15 AM — **Exhibit Hall Break** *Grand Ballroom*

10:15 AM-11:10 AM

Psoriatic Disease at the Intersection of Rheumatology and Dermatology
Iris Zink, MSN, APRN, ANP-BC & Andrea Rosik, PA-C
This dermatology–rheumatology panel discussion will explore the management of psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. There will be insights on early detection, treatment selection, and emerging therapies, while discussing strategies to improve patient outcomes through interdisciplinary collaboration. Through case-based discussion and multidisciplinary perspectives, attendees will gain practical insights into optimizing therapeutic decisions and improving outcomes for patients living with psoriatic disease.

11:15 AM-12:00 PM

Advocacy 101: Navigating State and Federal Policy for Nurses
Deborah Jackson - Senior Director, Clinical Nurse Consultants &
Michele Guadalupe - Director, State Alliance Development

Bristol Myers Squibb®

Nurses and advanced practice providers are among the most trusted voices in healthcare, and when they come together, they can drive meaningful change. Policy decisions at both the state and federal level shape how care is delivered and accessed. This "Advocacy 101" session will introduce the fundamentals of advocacy – why it matters, how it works, and the critical role clinicians play in shaping outcomes. Attendees will gain a clear understanding of how to engage in advocacy at both the state and federal level, learn practical ways to build relationships with policymakers, and explore how collective action can amplify the clinical voice to improve patient care.

12:15 PM-1:15 PM

Lunch Product Theater - *Sponsored by BMS*
The Next Chapter in PsA: Efficacy, Safety, and Dosing of a New Oral Treatment Option for Active Psoriatic Arthritis
Adam L. Dore, DO

Bristol Myers Squibb®

1:30 PM-2:15 PM — **Exhibit Hall Snack Break** *Grand Ballroom*

2:15 PM-3:10 PM

Immunology Essentials for the Rheumatology Nurse & APP
Rachael Lea Busch-Feuer DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, NP-C, NE-BC
As the therapeutic landscape in rheumatology continues to evolve, a practical understanding of immunology is essential for delivering informed, evidence-based patient care. This session will provide a clinically relevant review of the innate and adaptive immune systems, key immune cells and cytokines, and the immunologic mechanisms that drive autoimmune and inflammatory disease. Faculty will connect foundational immunology concepts to current and emerging treatment strategies, including biologic therapies, targeted synthetic DMARDs, and novel approaches such as CAR-T cell therapy. Designed for nurses and advanced practice providers, this session will strengthen participants' ability to understand mechanisms of action, anticipate therapeutic effects and safety considerations, and confidently translate immunologic principles into everyday clinical practice.

3:15 PM-3:30 PM — **RNS Business Meeting**

3:30 PM-7:00 PM — **Free Time**

7:00 PM-9:00 PM

Bingo with RNS Chapters
Join the RNS Chapters for a fun and interactive game of bingo designed to spark connection and friendly competition. Meet fellow attendees, learn more about RNS chapter involvement, and enjoy a lively atmosphere while playing for exciting RNS swag prizes. Whether you're a seasoned member or new to the community, this is a great opportunity to connect, engage, and win!

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SATURDAY, **AUGUST 1, 2026**

8:00 AM-9:00 AM — **Breakfast with Exhibitors** *Grand Ballroom*

9:05 AM-9:10 AM — **Welcome**

9:10 AM-10:40 AM

Sjögren's Disease: Through the Eyes of Our Patients

Devin Weidman, MSN, APRN-C; Alana Howe, APRN; Atlanta Visker & Holly Brewer

Sjögren's disease not only affects physical domains such as dryness, fatigue, and muscle pain, but also significantly impacts "hidden" quality of life indicators such as emotional well-being, social functioning, and general cognition. In this session, our two expert NP faculty will be joined by two patients with Sjögren's disease to discuss how and why this condition is so difficult to successfully diagnose and treat, and help uncover strategies that rheumatology providers can incorporate to more successfully address their patients' unique issues.

This session is supported by Novartis through an unrestricted educational grant.

10:45 AM-11:40 AM

Frontline Impact: The Role of Nurses and APPs in Reducing Rheumatology Disparities

Nayimisha Balmuri, MD, MS, MSE, FAAP, FACR

Rheumatic diseases are often difficult to recognize and can lead to significant morbidity when diagnosis and treatment are delayed. These challenges are compounded by health inequities that influence who gets diagnosed, when they receive care, and how they ultimately fare.

This session will explore the intersection of rheumatic disease and health inequity, highlighting how social determinants of health, environmental exposures, and barriers to specialty care shape outcomes for patients. Through clinical cases and practical strategies, participants will gain tools to recognize early signs of rheumatic disease, identify patients at higher risk for delayed care, and implement equitable approaches in everyday practice.

11:45 AM-12:40 PM

Interesting Cases from the Clinic

Andrea Rosik, PA-C

Through real-world clinical scenarios, the interesting cases presentation examines how cutaneous manifestations can serve as critical indicators of underlying systemic autoimmune and inflammatory diseases. Attendees will gain insight into diagnostic challenges, overlapping disease processes, and the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to patient care. Cases will emphasize conditions illustrating how skin findings can guide early detection, influence management strategies, and improve patient outcomes. This session is designed to enhance clinical recognition, deepen understanding of pathophysiologic connections, and foster collaboration between specialties.

1:10 PM-1:55 PM — **Closing Reception** *Atlantic Ballroom*