

Perspectives, Platforms and People

A not-so-short diary of @rheumarhyme 's first ACR

Lisa S. Traboco, MD

Global Rheumatology Exchange Program 2023

I. Perspectives:

Early this year, I was supposed to attend the EULAR 2023 conference as part of the EULAR-APLAR Exchange Program. As (bad) luck would have it — I did not get my Visa, and thus had to withdraw.

I was **devastated**. I was working so hard on my graduate school studies, juggling clinic work, on top of trying to do research. Despite managing to score a travel award for both Japan and Korean College of Rheumatology, I felt like I fell short of many, if not mainly my own, expectations. Feeling disappointed and dejected by fate, country, and embassy, I first sought comfort to a teacher to whom I can share both my triumphs and failures. Dr Sandra Navarra has always been a solid rock of support in whatever I wanted to do academically, and the setback was no exception. Try again — she said. And so I resubmitted, and waited.

Because I had no conferences lined up, I refocused my learning. For Medical Education: I finalized my [ARGO](#) reviewer report, which had accidentally branched into another teaching project — [vRheum](#). I also took on a bigger role on Gender Equity studies. The months also brought me time to work on myself: specifically my osteoarthritic knee. I developed early osteoarthritis due to dancing accident in residency, from which I never really fully recovered. With a lot of help from my coach, I was able to bring down my weight from 88kg to 83kg! I still need some help with protein build-up, but I am pleased with the recovery plan. Besides the physical, I wanted to feel happier: I spent more time with my beautiful dog, Luke. I also became more diligent with my maintenance medications. I even started listening (and singing) to my Spotify's mixed playlists again.

A few weeks after getting my US Visa re-approved, I recieved the amazing news that I was accepted for the ACR-APLAR Exchange Program! I was over the moon. Then the gates reopened: I was already going to the December APLAR conference, and more news followed of a more local regional APLAR CoE Exchange opportunity. (But that's for another time)

I started to think about the last time I was in the US. It was ten years ago, for a New York-Boston adventure. This time, it was going to be 100% academic purpose, and you could hear the inner geek in me screaming. After a two-leg exhausting trip from the other side of the world, I slumped into the cold embrace of the pillows in my cozy hotel-inn in the middle of Downtown San Diego. The morrow, Day 1, was dedicated to meeting my other co-fellows and visiting the UCSD — [Altman Clinical and Translational Research Institute](#).



<Ride the Magic Celebrity School Bus to ACTRI

Sunny San Diego and ACTRI: See how the Tropical Asian (me) is dressed for snow. I was FREEZING.>

While the facility was large and impressive, I could not help but feel a bit sad about the many empty rooms brought about by the Pandemic. Many of the labs did not have anyone working inside. I did enjoy the short inspirational lectures of Dr Tanaka and Dr Firestein, the interesting study introductions



of my co-fellows, and the subgroup lunch meeting with Dr Kavanaugh and Dr Susan Lee. I was most interested with the topics of my co-fellows Dr/s [Shinji Izuka](#) & [Diego Benavent](#), who are clear leaders in Machine Learning, Translational research and MRI Imaging studies. Barely on the surface of my graduate studies in informatics, I am excited to see what else rheumatology can do with it in the future. Also, I only learned later that Dr Benavent was also part of the [COVAD Study](#)! Who knew how many people I would meet through the leadership of Dr Latika Gupta. Amazing what (or who?) research can be brought together.

Some interesting revelations: did you know that APLAR only recently joined the Exchange Program? It's always been an ACR-EULAR Exchange for a very long time and I am very glad of the leadership Prof Danda and Prof Tanaka has provided to ensure we get a seat at the table this time around.



< Me and MedEd: Telling the story of how the ARGO started

While listening to the life perspective of Dr Firestein and the history of ACTRI, my first thought was — “*Waaah, this person was **THE** name in my books. What a life journey!*” What probably struck me the most was when he said, that as a mentor, he wants his mentees to be their best selves and that his role was to provide that environment. This will feel uncomfortable for many readers, and I don’t know if this is an Asian culture thing, but that is like —

so rare here. (*Except, as I have previously described, Dr SVN*) I know I don’t have to, (Cue [Dr Puja Mehta’s Daltroy Lecture here](#), a must-watch) but I want to defend myself with my reaction above. When I told some of my seniors I wanted to take up graduate studies after fellowship, these were the responses I got:

“Eh? You should just get pregnant & settle down.”

“Well, sure, whatever, that is IF you get accepted to XX university”

When I first wanted to propose a change in the primitive census documentation by creating a simple excel dashboard:

“I don’t think that’s going to work.”

“This is the way it’s always been”

So you see, how I found it baffling — and somewhat therapeutic to hear it being the norm halfway around the planet. This was further strengthened by the time we got to the luncheon meeting and all of us fellows were talking about our academic struggles, concerns, worries and hopes for our future. It was almost cathartic and had it not been lunch, a bucket of beer would have completed the soul-sharing.

On Friday, we began the **Global Rheumatology Summit**, with mostly online lectures, in keeping with providing rheumatology access around the world. I always like watching a Global Rheumatology Webinars. It was like you knew the world was big, but the Rheum was *really* big. My favorite session however, was actually the closing session because there was a representative from all regions sharing differences in their research priorities and opportunities. Obviously, I am partial to Dr Pulukool (our APLAR representative) and her stories — especially when she said how many of their patients could not afford cyclophosphamide, because I still see patients like that as well! Later that evening, we had the Global Rheumatology Networking Reception. Where, in addition to once again mingling with Exchange Program co-fellows, we also met the **Phil Robinson** Global Scholars. If you've spent a lot of time on Twitter like me, this was a moment, because Dr Robinson was a movement. He was one of the early rheumatologists I followed. I saw the first tweets on how they started the [GRA](#), even though I was only able to contribute 2 patients (and a survey translation). Honoring his legacy will always be a beautiful part of Global Rheumatology.



ACR Convergence 2023
Global Rheumatology Networking Reception
 Friday 10 November 2023
 Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina

Welcome

Evelyn Hsieh, Chair, ACR Global Engagement Committee

ACR-EULAR-APLAR Research Exchange Scholars

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Amir Almas - Kazakhstan | Andriko Palmowski - Germany |
| Diego Benavent Nunez - Spain | Antonios Psarras - UK |
| Elena Elefante - Italy | Anne-Kathrin Rausch Osthoff - Switzerland |
| Bayram Farisogullari - Turkey | Sebastien Sanges - France |
| Shinji Izuka - Japan | Sarit Sekhar Pattanaik - India |
| Mary Lucy Marques - Portugal | Lisa Traboco - Philippines |
| Yuzaiful Yusof - UK | Nurul Aulia Binti Zakaria - Malaysia |
| Alexander Oldroyd - UK | |

Tribute to Phil Robinson

Jinoos Yazdany- USA
 Rebecca Grainger-New Zealand
 Daman Langguth - Australia

Phil Robinson Global Scholars

Becky Abdissa Adugna - Ethiopia
 Rudrarpan Chattergee - India
 Porntip Intapiboon – Thailand



[Not Complete] Team APLAR



Complete [?]

After (finally) meeting more Twitter friends in real life (more on this later), a few of us ended the night with tacos (obviously), under the cold blue non-polarizing light of a busy taqueria. To Day 2! (Or is it Day 3, technically?) For Day 2 of the Exchange Program, I almost got lost in the Marriot Hotel. I contemplated if it was the jet lag or if there was really an endless loop of meeting rooms during the ACR. I found the room eventually and we proceeded to learn more about ACR-EULAR collaborations, (APLAR where art thou?), career development, and Lupus research. The rest of my co-fellows who had not yet presented also shared their interests for



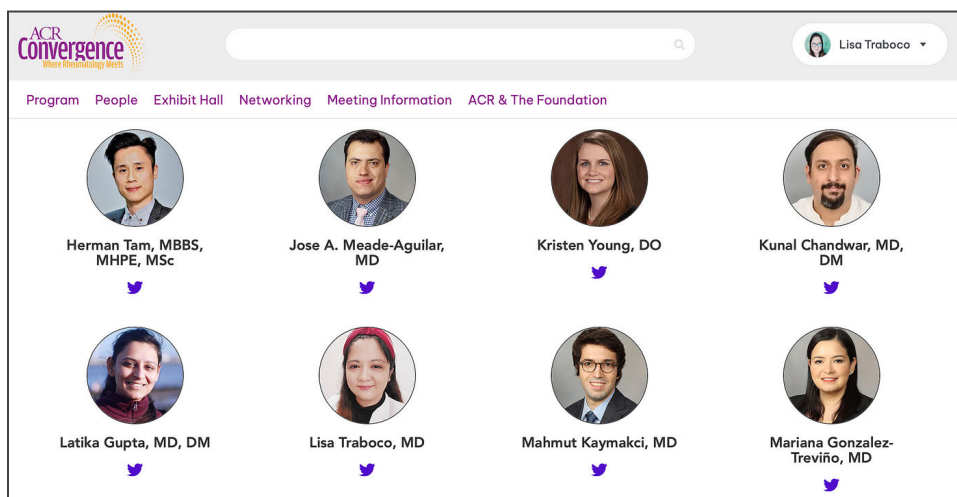
this day. What struck me the most on this day was when Prof Muller-Ladner shared that in EULAR, they make sure they have at least one (or two) young (or early career) rheumatologists in their committees. Again — *awkward*, that this may be a culture thing; but I am glad we are getting exposed to these perspectives. Another key moment I remember was Dr Firestein telling us to not shy away from leadership roles.

Before we went our separate ways, — I for one, wanted to catch the Radiology Bootcamp — I gave my co-fellows a Philippine [Papemelroti](#) notebook, (*totally, not endorsed*) to maybe remember me by. And photos, of course!



II. Platforms

If you knew me in my TwitterX Era, you probably know that although I have been tweeting conferences since pre-*Pandemia*, this is my 3rd year as ACR [Social Media Ambassador](#). Fun fact: this year also marks the first time I am attending *in person*.



It's me, Hi.



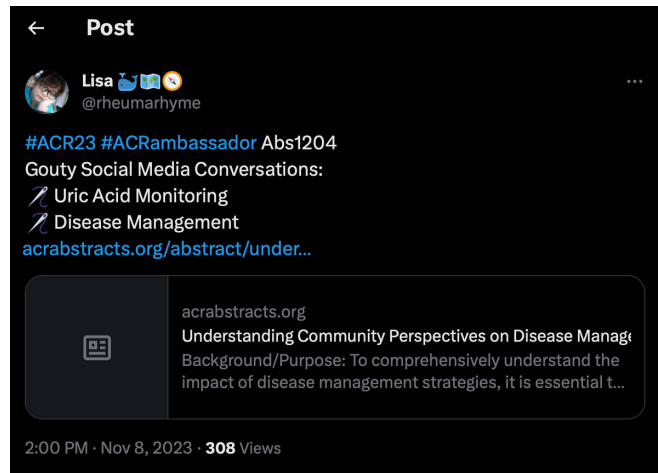
+ SoMe Ambassador ribbon, + Global Rheum Scholar ribbon, #BadgeGameStrong

Over the previous years, I've gotten pretty smart on how I live tweet the ACR. (* smirks in virtual *) I learned many tips along the way, many from the [most stylish cat](#) on TwitterX.

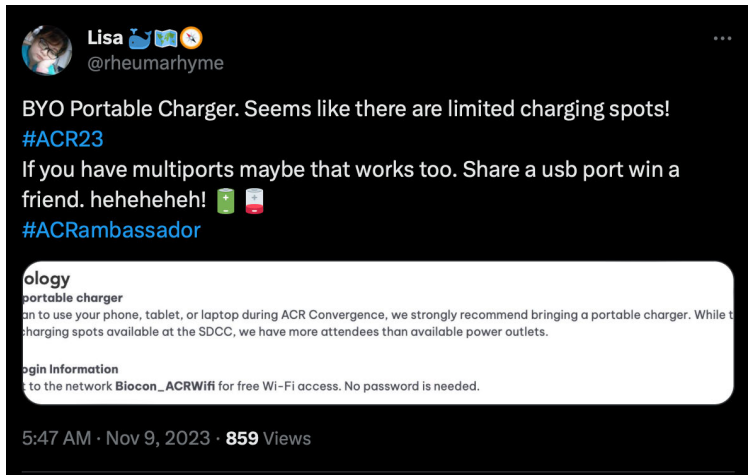
I begin posting even before the conference starts, a couple weeks prior, where my scheduled posts of abstracts I find interesting will start appearing. Because of school, I gravitate to studies regarding digital health, telemedicine, social media and recently — machine learning. More of my ACR agenda in this [link](#).

Pro Tip: Schedule your posts in your timezone, where most of your mutuals are!

I used to post tips about the conference website, how to use the Q&A, where to find the slides, or the weakness of the app for one. This year, I loved the experience that I can now tweet about the site/venue itself.

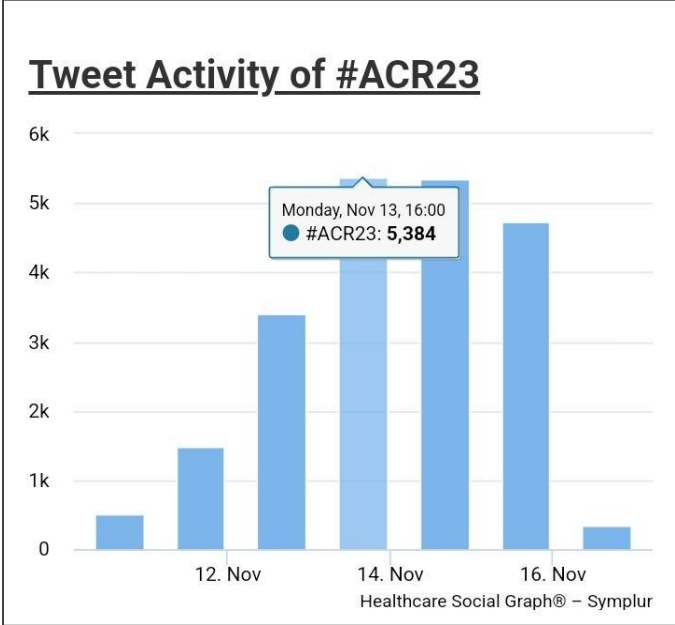


Alas, most of our islands have sunk in this Global Warming accurate diagram.



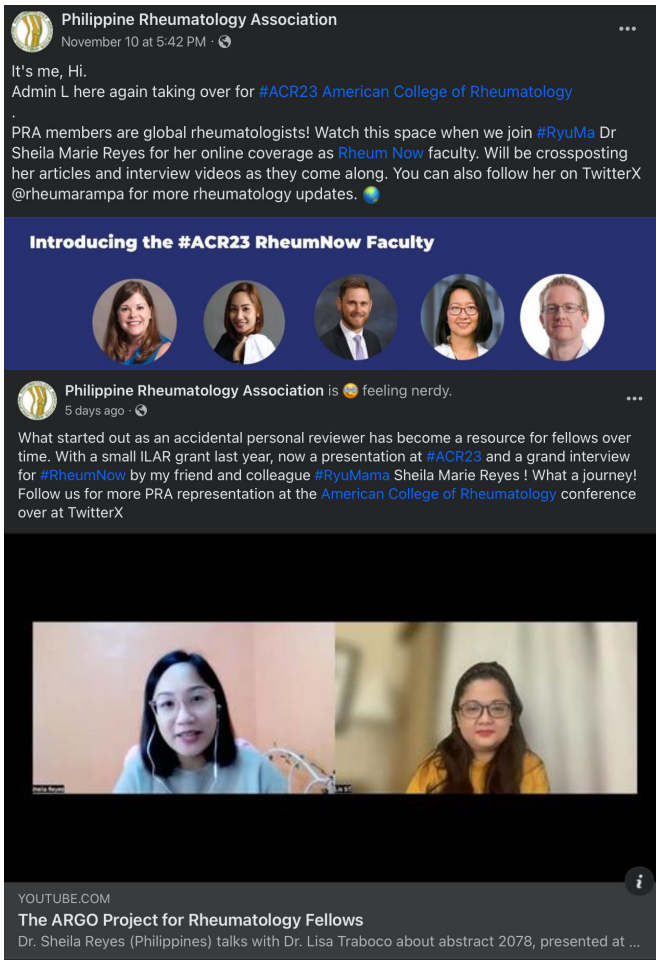
I also repost slides from speakers (if they are live tweeting as well), videos from [RheumNow](#) (more on my biased selections later), pdf links (if I can find them quickly). I love sharing and highlighting other peoples work. Especially when they get chosen for awards and key distinctions during the conference. I enjoy retweeting my co-authors' presentations and feel blessed to be part of something meaningful for patients and doctors. I'm

also a sucker for decorating my tweets with emojis, because I'm a doodler. More documentation of my Tweeting(now X?) habits in my blog entry from 2021: [Tweeting around Timezones](#). A little segway down memory lane: In 2020, there was a movement of pastries with the #ACR20DonutChallenge where rheumies shared their baking (or in my case, buying) skills a la patissière. Oh how the years have flown by.



<Rheumatologists around the world sharing uptodate rheum information, etc.

In addition to TwitterX, I also take over our [local society Facebook page](#) during ACR. This is because my friend & rheumatology batchmate, Dr Sheila Reyes, who is the chair for the PRA online engagement committee, is also a RheumNow faculty, so **obviously** — as her Social Media Manager, the biased cross-posting of her video summaries and articles will be evident. Hey, we're just really very proud of her, you know?



<<That's our APLAR/PRA member right there!

This year, with her being online and me on-site, we culminated one of our Medical Education Projects with a grand (well to me, it was grand) [interview](#). Perhaps some day in the future we get to be both on site. Or better yet, we need more PRA and APLAR rheumies to document their ACR/EULAR experiences online!

One PRA rheumatologist, Dr Aldo De Vera, told me I add “*personality*” to the FB page during ACR. I hope that’s a fun personality and actually agood thing? Let me know what you guys think so far.

This year, I ended my takeover differently — with my own ACR recommendation. That is, [that one video for On Demand Rewatch](#):

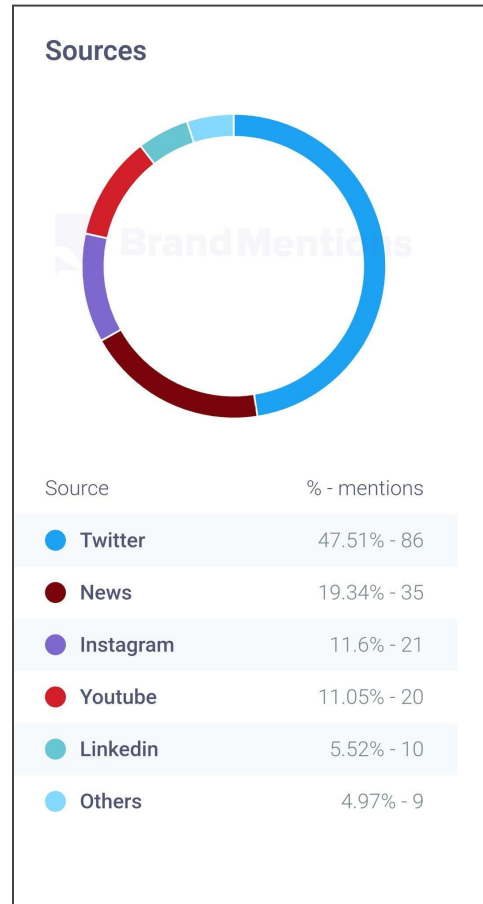
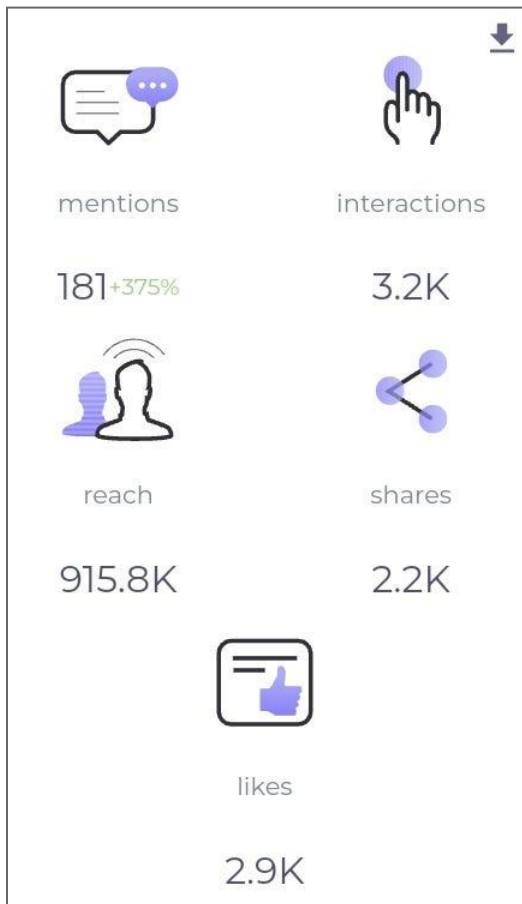
But why are these platforms important? Why did I dedicate one section of my write up towards it? Because the virtual space interacts with our real life space. Many things that reach us online affect our reality off line. In the era of misinformation and disinformation, I’d personally like to see more clear cut, 100% educational (non-gray-ethics-influencer-endorse) medical/health content. (Yes, *this is a subtext*) See below how our society affects the influence of ACR in this analytic website!



| 154 Influencers from Facebook | ▼ Mentions | Reach | Impressions | Latest Mention |
|---|------------|--------|-------------|----------------|
| American College of Rheumatology Rheumatology | 132 | 25,293 | 3.34 mil | 2:30 AM |
| Spondylitis Association of America spondylitis | 16 | 27,833 | 445,328 | 3:05 AM |
| Philippine Rheumatology Association rheumatologyph.org | 11 | 7,585 | 83,435 | 7:00 AM |
| Panlar panlarorg | 10 | 34,236 | 342,360 | 7:18 AM |
| Looms4Lupus Looms4Lupus | 9 | 1,593 | 14,337 | 13 Nov |

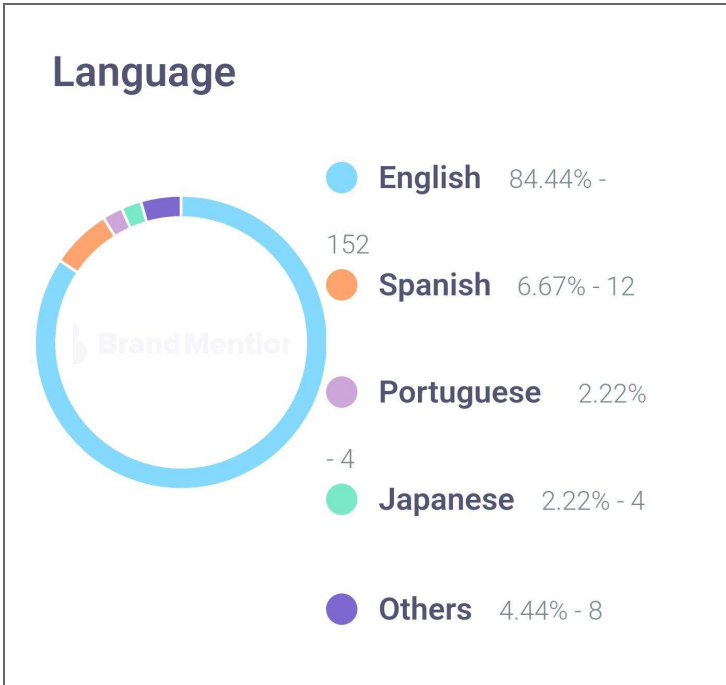
<<The PRA as an influencer!

The succeeding (free) images are from BrandMentions Analytics. It highlights the importance of social media when conferences like these happens. People talk about rheumatology, share about rheumatology and we get to have our voices (and patient partners) heard. In addition, this analytics website includes all major social platforms and allows the inclusion of alternate hashtags (#ACR2023) we get an amazing overview as to how far the influence of ACR rheumatology expands.



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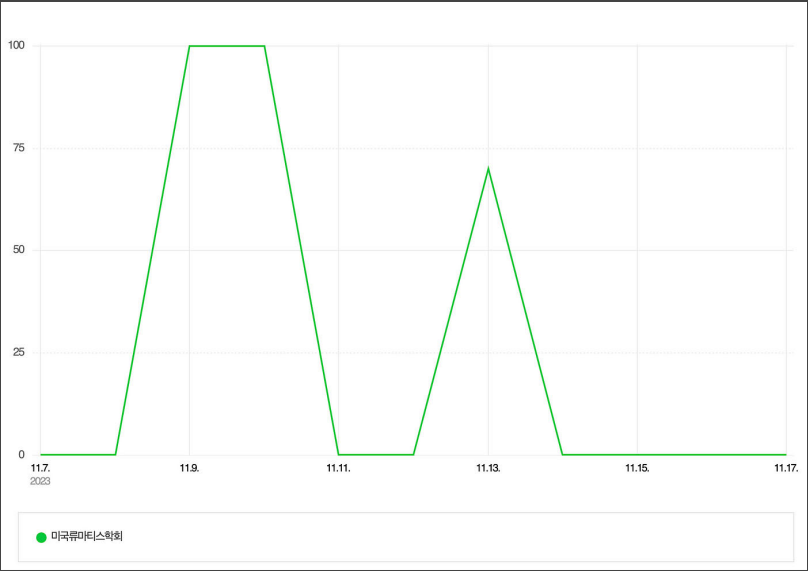
The next image of particular interest to me, both as a language learner and as a member of the APLAR region.



すごい！

Our APLAR region is so diverse. We have many islands, and many languages — most of which **do not use roman letters**. This further groups us into silos of social media platforms depending on language or country. Culture-wise, we are also **so** different, and are often embarrassed of our English proficiencies. I am so pleased to see this image, so see one of the languages I love participating & being noticed. Perhaps one day we can get more APLAR rheumatologists to try to bridge this divide. For example, Korea uses their social media platform and search engine NAVER rather than Google or TwitterX. In addition, I assumed they

don't use the hashtag #ACR23 because I don't see it in the data trend search, so I looked for trends using 미국류마티스학회, et voila!



<<Seems like there was at least some activity during the ACR week! We just don't see each other.

Can you imagine what we can learn from each other when we go beyond the language barrier?

And Finally,

III. People

I wanted to put this section as a highlighted finale because as much as I am an introvert, I adore meeting people. (*I just need moments of silence to recharge, is all*) My friendship-love language is seeking you out because that takes a **ton** of awkward effort for me to meet you in person. Given future meetings, I will also love giving trinkets and presents because I like associating people with places and experiences. I believe life is made more special because people connect. Isn't that also why Rheumies are such nice doctors?

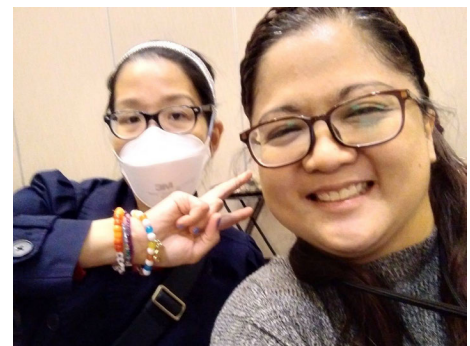


Blurred, but loved. First time meeting Dr Rebecca Grainger: our SIG team leader & one of my Rheum Idols



Dr Sufka (the first Rheum I followed!) and Dr Bhana. Tech Rheumies!

MILESTONE. THE rheum cat. I gave her a fan because I'm a FAN.



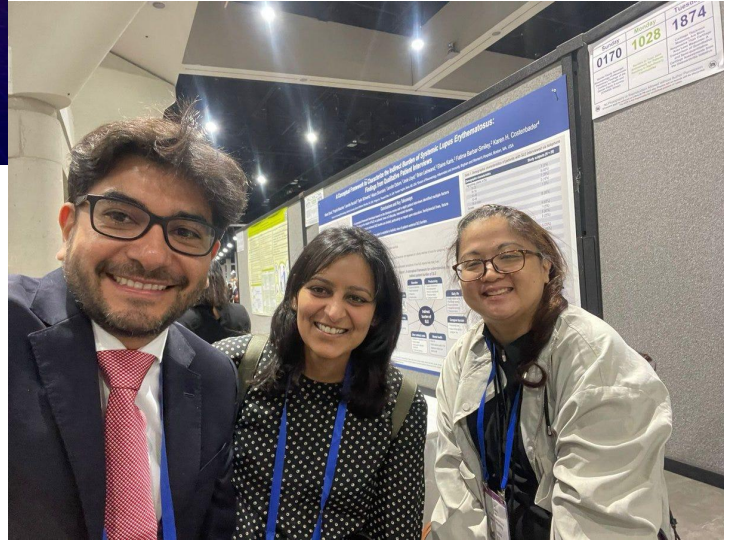
Brace yourselves: Trend setters.





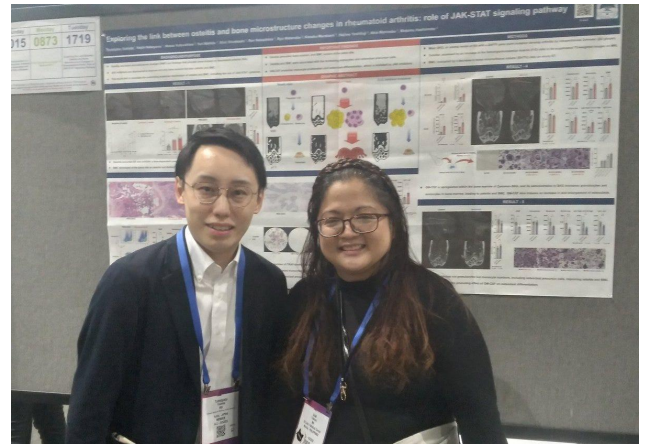
Blue Non-Polarizing Tacos

My favorite EU+APLAR person Dr Latika Gupta, introducing me to Dr Carlos Enrique Toro



Showcasing my bracelets with The Dr Rheum Barbie Noelle! My pink hair extensions are ready!

When you were already friends in your mind, but you're actually meeting JSTAR superstar Dr Yoshida for the first time.





From Twitter, to COVAD, to Real Life, I found Dr Chris Wincup!



I found Latika again for her KCR present and finally met Dr Mini Dey! More Team COVAD :)



Karaoke with RheumNow faculty, Global Rheum Scholars & TwitterX Rheumies! and no I will not show you video evidence of my singing, it must be experienced in person. Amirite??

I'm just saying y'all haven't heard me sing Michelle Branch yet.



Alas, time and space, did not want me to complete my TwitterX-to-meet list. But that's a good thing, right? It means there will always be a tomorrow to look forward to.

More perspectives to learn, more platforms to explore and more people to meet and change your life.

I close this extensive-jam-packed-to-the-brim-diary of my first in-person ACR experience: over the top, overwhelming — true, and memorable in every way — back to my side of the planet for a much needed recharge. Because there's more to do, & it's only the beginning of the exchange. But if I just give myself rheum to —

breathe, you'll see ...everything's alright.