



# The Patient as the Best Teacher: Learning Beyond Textbooks



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In the world of medicine, textbooks provide knowledge, but true wisdom often comes from those who live with the conditions we study. This philosophy came to life at the recent **Patient Partners in Rheumatology Workshop**, held at the University of Santo Tomas Faculty of Medicine & Surgery last February 7, 2025 that was made possible through the dedication of rheumatology consultants, fellows, and residents, all of whom played a crucial role in guiding discussions and enhancing student learning. Designed to bring students up close and personal with patients, the event reinforced a fundamental truth: *the patient is the best teacher*.

## A Learning Experience Like No Other

Medical students, guided by faculty and fellows from the Division of Rheumatology, engaged in hands-on learning with real patients diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and psoriatic arthritis (PsA). Through structured musculoskeletal physical examinations (MSK PE) and patient narratives, students gained insights beyond the clinical signs—they saw resilience, struggle, and triumph.



The event was divided into two key workshop rooms, each focusing on different aspects of chronic inflammatory arthritis. One session delved into long-standing RA complications, highlighting the effects of inflammation on the cardiovascular system and bone health. The second session expanded on the pathophysiology and physical manifestations of RA and PsA, providing students with a deeper understanding of disease progression.



# Patient Partners: The Heart of the Workshop



More than just subjects of examination, Patient Partners became mentors. They shared their experiences—the first symptoms, the struggles with diagnosis, the challenges of treatment, and the small victories in everyday life. These stories added a human dimension to medicine, reminding students that healing extends beyond prescriptions and procedures.



For students, observing real deformities, range of motion limitations, and joint involvement in chronic arthritis was an eye-opening experience. But more importantly, hearing personal narratives cultivated empathy—a crucial skill for any future rheumatologist.



## Lessons That Transcend Medicine

By the end of the session, students walked away with more than just clinical knowledge. They gained a deeper appreciation for the patient's journey, the importance of a holistic approach to care, and the realization that medicine is as much about listening as it is about diagnosing.

In a world where patient-doctor interactions are often limited to brief consultations, Patient Partners in Rheumatology serves as a powerful reminder that true learning happens at the bedside, in the stories shared, and in the compassion we cultivate. After all, the patient is, and always will be, the best teacher.

