As part of SAA's ongoing mission to expand horizons in spondyloarthritis research, we hope to encourage and support new, upcoming rheumatologists and researchers in advancing spondyloarthritis research.

The SAA/Bruckel Early Career Investigator Award, created in 2001, recognizes outstanding "contributions to the care and understanding of patients with spondyloarthritis." The award winner receives a $20,000 grant from SAA to use in spondyloarthritis research. The annual award is usually given to just one investigator; however, on rare occasions when the competition is too tough, SAA awards multiple $20,000 awards. This was one such year.

We recognize the numerous contributions of, and introduce our readers to, Drs. Kristine Kuhn and Maureen Dubreuil.

"Research has shown that 30-50% of patients with spondyloarthritis will develop bowel inflammation and about 50% of patients with IBD develop disease outside of the intestines that affects their eyes, skin, and joints."

Spondylitis Plus: Please tell us a bit about your general research focus, your recent work, and what you are most excited about in SpA research.

Dr. Kuhn: "My clinical and research interests are related to spondyloarthritis with a special emphasis for those with overlapping Inflammatory Bowel Diseases (IBD). Research has shown that 30-50% of patients with spondyloarthritis will develop bowel inflammation and about 50% of patients with IBD develop disease outside of the intestines that affects their eyes, skin, and joints, which prompts consultation with a rheumatologist. Our recent work is looking at how gut bacteria develop local immune cells that traffic to the joints and initiate arthritis. We hope to identify these cells as a biomarker for disease as well as inhibit this trafficking for the treatment of spondyloarthritis."

Spondylitis Plus: How will the SAA/Bruckel award help support your research?

Dr. Kuhn: "Medical research, in general, is benefiting from the development of some exciting new tools that allow us to investigate a large number of factors in a small piece of tissue or in blood. Support from the SAA/Bruckel award will allow us to utilize these technologies. Such work will allow more rapid advancements for spondyloarthritis."