

Rheumatology: a speciality for the young? Report from the 1st *Navigate Autoimmunity* Conference

The first edition of the *Navigate Autoimmunity* international students' conference was held on 14 March 2026, onsite, at the National Institute of Geriatrics, Rheumatology, and Rehabilitation (NIGRiR) in Warsaw, Poland, and online.

The conference covered an interdisciplinary approach to autoimmunity, rheumatology, immunology, and modern pharmacotherapy. The programme included keynote lectures, sessions with participants' research presentations, poster walks, and workshops, to ensure that everyone could find a topic of particular interest and expand their knowledge in the field.

The opening lecture, by Mr Michał Kowara, MD PhD, and Prof. Agnieszka Cudnoch-Jędrzejewska (both from MUW, Warsaw), dealt with the topic of cannabinoids as potential immune system modulators. Prof. Carlo Perricone (UNIPG, Perugia) emphasised the importance of genetic factors in autoimmunity, while Prof. Yehuda Shoenfeld (TAU, Tel-Aviv) focused on the underlying causes of autoimmune disease. Prof. György Nagy (SE, Budapest) mentioned difficult-to-treat rheumatoid arthritis, and Prof. Maria Maślińska (NIGRiR, Warsaw) talked about autoimmune syndrome induced by adjuvants.

Students presented original papers and case reports, followed by a discussion, during six main sessions and two poster walks. They tackled challenging questions and engaged in vivid, casual discussions afterwards. Works were also presented by participants from Poland, Ukraine, and Hungary. The conference resulted in a supplement to *Reumatologia*, composed of abstracts of all the papers selected by the reviewers. Three winners qualified to present their abstracts at the Conference of the Polish Society for Rheumatology, to be held in May 2026 in Krakow.

The conference was organised by the Student Scientific Group *Rheumaticus* (Medical University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland), based at the NIGRiR, with the organising committee comprising three sixth-year medical students: Mr Paweł Piluch, Mr Mateusz Wójcik, and Mr Piotr Kacprzyk.

The patronage of the conference was kindly granted by the NIGRiR, the Polish National Consultant for Rheumatology, Prof. Brygida Kwiatkowska, the Polish Society of Rheumatology with its Head, Prof. Zbigniew Żuber, the Polish Institute for Evidence-Based Medicine, and three student organisations.

Navigate Autoimmunity could not have taken place without the support of its patrons and generous sponsors: *Fundacja Instytutu na Spartańskiej*, Boehringer Ingelheim, *Reumatologia* journal, and the publishing houses: Medycyna Praktyczna, PZWL, Wydawnictwo Lekarskie PZWL and Wydawnictwo Czelej.



Fig. 1. Dr Michał Kowara lecturing on cannabinoid interactions with the immune system.



Fig. 2. The poster walk caught everyone's attention.



Fig. 3. The Head of the Organising Committee introduces the speaker.

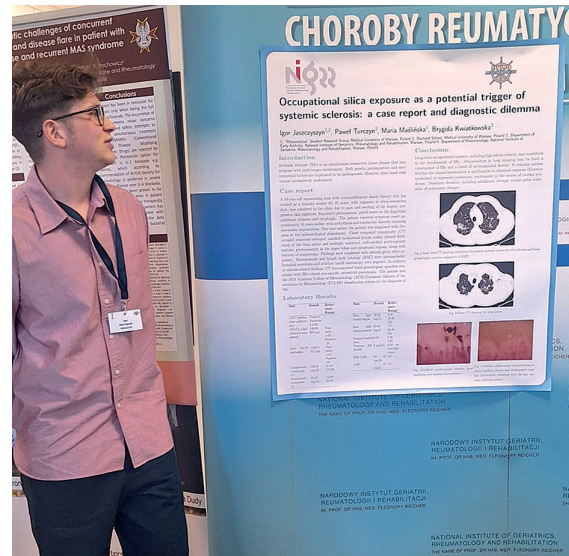


Fig. 4. Mr Igor Jaszczyszyn displaying his poster.



Fig. 5. Research session. Mr Michał Pilkowski presenting case report.

I hope this conference has become an annual fixture for those fascinated by autoimmune processes: medical students and experienced specialists alike, to view these diseases from a variety of perspectives, establish new connections, and initiate interdisciplinary scientific cooperation between research centres. I wholeheartedly encourage you to view the conference proceedings and join *Navigate Autoimmunity 2027*.

Maria Maślińska
 Head of the Scientific Committee
 of the 1st *Navigate Autoimmunity Conference*

Paweł Piluch
 Head of the Organising Committee
 of the 1st *Navigate Autoimmunity Conference*