Director of the Research Center
J.W.J. Bijlsma (Prof. MD, PhD, Medical Director)

Institution
Rheumatology & Clinical Immunology
University Medical Centre Utrecht

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Members of the Center

Full professors
Lafeber FPJG (PhD) Experimental rheumatology; Manager of research
Hack EC (MD, PhD) (10%) Innate immunology of chronic immune disease
Geenen R (UU, Clin. & Health Psychol.) Psychology of rheumatic diseases

Associate professors
Derksen RWHM (MD, PhD) clinical immunology; SLE
Jacobs JWG (MD, PhD) epidemiology, RA
Laan van der WH (MD, PhD) (10%) osteoarthritis; OA

Assistant professors/PIs
Roon van JAG (PhD, immunologist) (80%) immunology
Mastbergen SC (PhD, med. biologist) (cartilage) tissue regeneration
Welsing PMJ (PhD, epidemiologist) (60%) epidemiology

Medical Specialists/PhDs
Marijnissen ACA (PhD, 80%) Medical ethical affairs and clinical monitoring
Kruize AA (MD, PhD) Sjögren’s syndrome (SS)
Rijthoven van AWAM (MD, PhD) Clinical trials
Tekstra J (MD, PhD) Rheumatoid arthritis (RA)
Ton E (MD) Sclerodermia research
Fritsch Stork R (MD) Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE)
**PhD Students**

Bakker Marije  
Bikker Angela  
Blom David  
Boer de Tieneke  
Goes vande Marlies (MD)  
Hartkamp Andre (MD)  
Hillen Maarten  
Hoes Jos (MD)  
Huo Justin  
Jurgens Maud  
Kinds Margot  
Kool Marianne  
Leeuwen van Ninke  
Meegeren van Monique  
Moret Frederique  
Nair Sandhya  
Nieuwenhuizen Laurens (MD)  
Spil van Erwin (MD)  
Vos Petra (MD)  
Wesseling Janet  
Wiegant Karen  
vacancy  

**Technicians**

Wenting-van Wijk MJG (80%)  
Wurff -Jacobs van der KMG (80%)  
Barten AD  
Vianen ME (30%)  
Louws C (70%)  
Veghel van K  
Conception AN  
Berg van de D  
vacancy  

**Research nurses**

Sloeserwij A (60%)  
Dietvorst M (60%)  
Van Door J (60%)  

**Data managers/analysers**

Sijbers-Klaver M (60%)  
Jacobs A (20%)  
Everdingen van M (5%)  
Lafeber-Melief MHG (10%)  
Bakker J (15%)  
Graauw de M (60%)  

Computer Assisted Measurement of Early RA  
The role of IL-7 in SS  
Psychosocial threats in fibromyalgia and RA  
Selective COX-2 inhibition in OA  
Efficacy and side effects of GC treatment in RA  
Fatigue and DHEAS treatment in SS and SLE  
IL-7 and TSLP in RA and SS  
Efficacy and side effects of GC treatment in RA  
Automated X-ray analyses of joint damage in RA  
Cost effectiveness of tailored treatment of RA imaging in OA  
Quantification of key issues in rheumatic disease  
Psychological evaluation of SS  
Blood induced cartilage damage  
Prediction of biological efficacy  
Health technology assessment in RA  
Coagulation and inflammation in joint damage  
Serum and urine biomarkers in OA  
Aging of cartilage predisposes to OA  
Coordinator OA short hip & cohort knee (CHECK)  
Joint distraction as treatment of severe OA  
Pain receptor identification in OA
Current Fields of Research
Our final goal is to improve clinical practice by development and improvement of diagnosis and treatment of rheumatic diseases.

For this purpose we perform translational rheumatology research: questions from basic research are translated, when necessary and possible via *in vivo* animal research, to clinical studies. The other way around, questions raised from clinical practice are translated into basic research and results will be confirmed (when necessary and possible via *in vivo* animal studies) by clinical studies.

There is a focus on translational biomedical research. There are three central themes based on three specific patient populations: patient with *rheumatoid arthritis*, with *osteoarthritis*, and with *systemic auto immune diseases*. In each of these themes, various research lines are subject of study. This research fits within the central themes ‘chronic inflammation’ and ‘musculoskeletal tissues’ each within two of the six focus areas of the UMC Utrecht: ‘immunity’ and ‘regenerative medicine - stem cells’.

In all cases cohorts of patients are the basis, enabling clinical (epidemiologic) studies, as well as *ex vivo* research. These cohorts are also a source of biomaterials for more fundamental *in vitro* approaches. Questions arising from clinical practice will be studied using these *in vitro* and *ex vivo* approaches. When findings appear of relevance they are tested in animal models and subsequently may enter clinical trials.

More details about our mission, setting, research group and collaborations can be found on this website: [www.umcutrecht.nl/rheumatology-research](http://www.umcutrecht.nl/rheumatology-research).

Selected Publications
(for an overview of all publications, see [www.umcutrecht.nl/rheumatology-research](http://www.umcutrecht.nl/rheumatology-research).)

- Glucosamine sulphate in osteoarthritis; the jury is still out. Bijlsma JWJ and Lafeber FPJG. Annals of Internal Medicine 2008; 148:315-316. IF:16
- Intensive treatment with methotrexate in early rheumatoid arthritis: aiming for remission. Computer Assisted Management in Early Rheumatoid Arthritis (CAMERA, an open-label


Current Funding
University Medical Centre Utrecht
Dutch Arthritis Association
Industries
Government

Training of Fellows in Research
The department of Rheumatology & Clinical Immunology has for its research the disposal (alone or in collaboration) of large patients cohorts, relevant animal models (central animal facility) and a well equipped research laboratory specialized in cell and tissue culture and protein-chemistry.

Research within the department is directed by a rheumatologist (head of the department) and a biologist (manager of research of the department). There is an integrated collaboration with the UU on 'psychology of rheumatic diseases' and the UMCU, department 'laboratory and pharmacy' on more basic immunology and protein chemistry, and there is close collaboration with the department of orthopedics on 'cartilage tissue regeneration'. The research program is structured by three principle investigators (PIs) with each a clinical counterpart (co-PI). One team for the immunology (a physician in rheumatology / internal medicine with a (medical) biologists / immunologists), one for tissue regeneration (a physician in rheumatology with a (medical) biologist), and one for the epidemiology regarding inflammation and tissue regeneration (a physician in rheumatology with an epidemiologist). Clinical work is supported/coordinated by a PhD and an MD, specialized in this field. The research is executed in addition by (PhD) students/trainees in medicine, (medical)biology, movement scientists or related training, technicians, research nurses, and datamanagers.

This organisation and infrastructure provides the necessary ingredients to perform state-of-the-art translational research.

WebPages
www.umcutrecht.nl
www.umcutrecht.nl/rheumatology-research