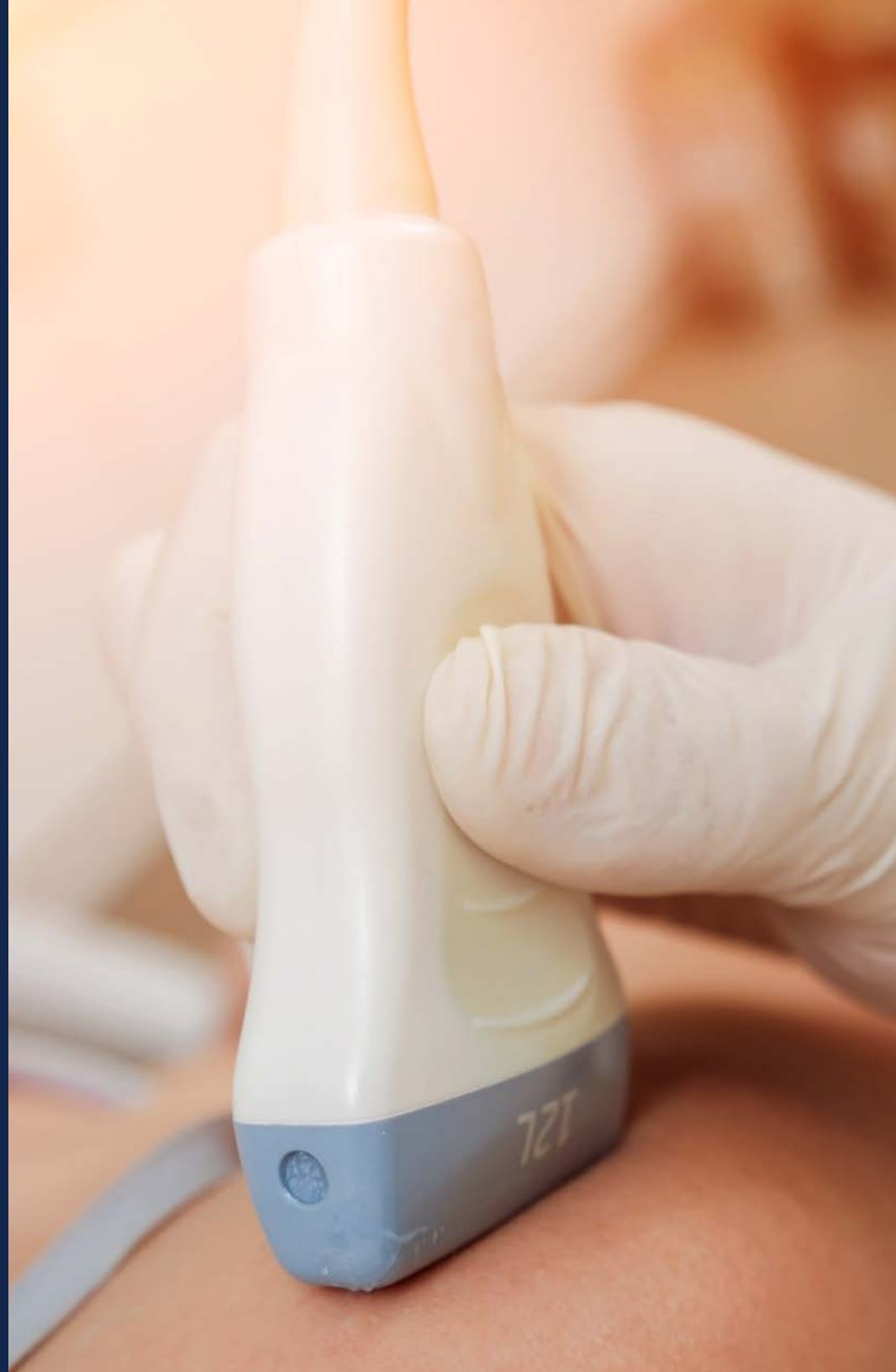


Build rheumatology skills in your office

Through the **Specialty Training at Rural Sites-Rheumatology (STARS-R) grant opportunity**, rural PCPs gain hands-on rheumatology and musculoskeletal training at no cost. Much of the training can occur without leaving the clinic, and participating hospitals are reimbursed for the time PCPs spend in training.



STARS-R at a glance

- No cost, hands-on rheumatology and musculoskeletal training for PCPs, delivered by UW academic rheumatologists
- UW academic rheumatologists come to your clinic for direct patient access and provider education
- Training occurs over a 6-month period, with options including:
 - Mini-Fellowship
 - Preceptorship
 - Skills Retreat



Grant support removes financial barriers

Grant funds cover:

- Primary care physician time spent training
- Travel
- Supplies and equipment- includes an ultrasound machine when participating in a mini-fellowship
- Implementation costs



Benefits for physicians, hospitals and communities



Physicians

- Paid CME and hands-on training
- New skills
- Strong connection to UW specialists
- Professional fulfillment



Hospitals

- More local care, fewer costly referrals
- Increased capacity and potential recruitment appeal
- Higher volume of billable procedures kept in-house



Patients

- Faster care that is closer to home
- Less travel and disruption
- Fewer costly referrals

STARS-R case snapshot: The Richland Hospital and Clinics

Watch



Innovative training program
expands rheumatology access
in Richland Center.

Read

From Long Drives to Local Solutions: Orion Initiative Helped Bring Rheumatology Care to Richland Center

About a year ago, The Richland Hospital and Clinics (TRHC) embarked on an innovative journey into rheumatology care through an exciting pilot program developed in partnership with the Orion Initiative at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. This collaboration created a connection between TRHC and the UW academic medical community.

"Access to this sort of specialty care was not available in our area. Rheumatology impacts residents of all ages," said Dr. Brian Kroil, family physician with The Richland Hospital and Clinics, and UW School of Medicine and Public Health alum. "That meant our patients faced referrals to other hospitals which required long drives and long waits for appointments."

By agreeing to participate in a mini fellowship offered through the Orion Initiative, TRHC found a better way to bring this essential care home.

The program was designed by Dr. James Dickman, Dr. Brian Kroil, and the Division of Rheumatology at the UW Department of Medicine. With financial support from the Orion Initiative, they launched a pilot called Specialty Training at Rural Sites - Rheumatology, or STARS-R. Their goal was to enable patients to receive care in our community by creating a direct communication channel between select TRHC family medicine providers and UW academic rheumatologists.

In addition to Dr. Dickman and Dr. Kroil, other trained providers

From Long Drives to Local
Solutions: Orion Initiative Helped
Bring Rheumatology Care to
Richland Center.

Patient and Provider Impact

28% decrease

in rheumatology referrals

100% of providers

felt professionally fulfilled
by the end of the STARS-R
program

Physician perspective

As a busy rural physician, I appreciated how easy the STARS-R program was to implement. The process was clear, efficient, and required very little extra lift on our end.

Dr. Jamey Dickman (*pictured below*)
Clinic Medical Director and
STARS-R participating physician
The Richland Hospital and Clinics



2026 STARS-R Grant Opportunities

- Grant awards available for 8 rural hospitals
- Applications reviewed on a case-by-case basis
- Application approvals: Spring/ Summer 2026 for Fall 2026 start; Fall/Winter 2026 for Spring 2027 start
- Short, easy application-apply early to secure a grant award for their preferred training session



Curious if STARS-R is a fit for your hospital?

Contact Jennifer Stegall, Administrative
Associate Director, at Stegall2@wisc.edu

