



# AARDA 2019 Summit

## Patients' Role in Step Therapy Reform

AARDA has conducted summits for autoimmune patients across the country on public policy priorities and strategies for patient advocacy at the federal and state levels. On October 23rd, AARDA convened three expert panels in Washington, DC to provide information, advocacy models, and a “call to action” for patients on research, step therapy, and caregiving for people with intermittent chronic conditions.

You can watch the recording of “Patients’ Role in Step Therapy Reform” by following this link:  
<https://youtu.be/IT7hRQgk51Q>.

Below are the biographies of the panelists and additional information.

### **Ben Chandhok**

Ben Chandhok is the Senior Director of State Legislative Affairs for the Arthritis Foundation, responsible for leading the state advocacy program. Additionally, Ben serves as co-chair of the State Access for Innovative Medicines coalition focused on step therapy reform and addressing out-of-pocket costs and as a consumer representative for the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. Before joining the Arthritis Foundation in 2016, Ben served as a Legislative Director in the Massachusetts House of Representatives and in the Rhode Island General Assembly as a Legislative Budget Analyst. He received his Juris Doctor from Boston College Law School and his Bachelor of Arts from Case Western Reserve University.

### **Harry Gewanter, MD, FAAP, MACR**

Dr. Gewanter retired from Pediatric and Adolescent Health Partners in December of 2015 after many years of active practice of Pediatric Rheumatology. In addition to remaining active in the Rheumatology community on patient access and physician practice issues, he also serves as the Medical Director for Medical Home Plus Inc. Dr. Harry Gewanter earned his medical degree from Wayne State University. After completing his medical degree he completed his internship and residency at the University of Rochester and Strong Memorial Hospital, which was followed by a General Pediatrics Academic Fellowship in Rheumatology sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. During his career Dr. Gewanter has served as a tireless advocate and pillar of the Rheumatology community in Virginia, as well as nationally. He serves as a member of the Virginia Patient Advocacy Task Force, Chair of the Virginia Arthritis Foundation Advocacy Committee, and as a board member for the Disability Law Center of Virginia. Dr. Gewanter has been particularly active in the area of biologic and biosimilar drugs, serving as the immediate past chair of the Alliance for Safe Biologic Medicines. Through his involvement in this organization he has delivered testimony on numerous occasions, including to the International Nonproprietary Naming Committee, the FDA’s Oncology Drugs Advisory Committee, and the Kansas Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare. Rounding out his advocacy experience, Dr. Gewanter has also served as Chair of RheumPAC. Dr. Gewanter has received numerous recognitions and awards for his medical work and teaching and educational activities. He has been published in numerous times of the course of his career, with 32 professional citations to his name.



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## **Randall Rutta**

Mr. Rutta is a senior health care executive dedicated to policy-to-practice solutions that interpret, influence, and improve federal and state health care policies to enhance public and private sector health care innovation, outcomes, and efficiency.

Mr. Rutta is President & CEO of the American Autoimmune Related Disease Association (AARDA), a national organization dedicated to addressing the problem of autoimmunity, the major cause of more than 100 serious chronic diseases. AARDA initiated and hosts the 39-member National Coalition of Autoimmune Patient Groups and is a longtime member of the National Health Council. Prior to stepping into his current role on October 1, 2019, he served as AARDA's Federal Policy Consultant since March 2018.

Mr. Rutta is a Principal in ConnectHealth, LLC a Washington, DC-based consulting services company he established in 2017 and incorporated in 2018 to provide senior health/behavior health executives strategic insight and support in achieving objectives across the healthcare eco-system. His portfolio emphasizes the experiences of patients, their families and communities, and the role of diverse stakeholders in improving individual and population health, especially for persons with autism and other chronic conditions, age-related impairments and disabilities. Client partners include: patient advocacy groups, coalitions, associations, service providers, and investment firms.

In 2017, he transitioned from the position of President and CEO at Easterseals, a global nonprofit organization dedicated to the health, well-being, and success of people with disabilities, veterans, seniors, and families. For most of his career, he was located in Washington, DC, at Easterseals' Office of Public Affairs, overseeing federal and state legislative and regulatory activities, federal grant development, and international knowledge exchange. His career experience has been in acute care, health care quality assurance, and health policy development and implementation.

He chairs the Board of the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease (PFCD), a national coalition of nearly 100 patient, provider, and community organizations, business and labor groups, and health policy experts committed to raising awareness of chronic disease in America and globally. He has been involved with PFCD as a partner organization leader and board member since 2007.

He is a Vice President and Secretary of American Eagle Lifecare Corporation and has been a member of its Board of Directors since 2008.

He holds a Bachelors of Arts degree in Sociology and a Masters of Arts degree in Politics, focusing on international health policy.