EULAR Congress News

PREVIEW EDITION

An authorised publication of the European League Against Rheumatism

EULAR congress in Madrid will lay groundwork for the future as we celebrate the past 70 years

Dear Colleagues,

The beginning of the next EULAR Annual European Congress of Rheumatology is only 1 month away, taking place 14-17 June 2017 in Madrid, Spain. At this year's 18th annual congress, we celebrate the 70th anniversary of EULAR and its second visit to Madrid, where the 2017 congress will again provide a unique event for the exchange of scientific and clinical information. It will be a platform to facilitate interactions among patients, medical doctors, scientists, health professionals, and professionals representing the pharmaceutical industry both from within Europe and from around the world. In addition, we will also see the first results of our new initiatives regarding the EULAR School of Rheumatology, the EULAR Campaign "Don't Delay, Connect Today" and the EULAR Research Roadmap "RheumaMap."

Prof. Gerd R. Burmester

EULAR congresses have received tremendous interest in terms of participation and quality of contributions. This year, we are again expecting almost 14,000 participants from more than 100 countries in Europe and around the world. We have received more than 4,850 abstract submissions, which is by far the highest ever at a EULAR congress. Overall, 48% have been accepted for presentation and another 26% for publication. A total of 347 were accepted as oral presentations this year, and the congress features 180 sessions and poster tours with 355 speakers. An additional 37 industry-supported scientific symposia will also be held. These numbers also reflect the availability of increased information on the impact, burden, and cost of these diseases for society and a significantly improved ability to diagnose and treat them. The incorporation of health professional and patient organisations within EULAR has been a considerable stimulus for these advances. This integration will facilitate the implementation of recommendations for management/standards of care of musculoskeletal disorders in daily practice, of which we have seen prime examples in the London EULAR congress.

The EULAR Congress 2017 in Madrid will once again offer a wide range of topics, including clinical innovations, clinical translational research, and basic science. In addition, there will be meetings organised by People with Arthritis and Rheumatism in Europe (PARE), by Health Professionals in Rheumatology (HPR), and by the healthcare industry. The central activities of the congress will be poster presentations and poster tours with their highly interactive exchanges among participants. Out of the 2,336 poster displays spread over 3 days, 461 posters will be explained in 45 themed poster tours. The Madrid event will further strengthen the reputation of the EULAR congress as a highly innovative and informative venue for clinical and translational researchers, as well as for practicing physicians, health professionals in rheumatology, and patients within the different facets of our discipline (e.g., inflammation, pain, bone, mechanical, and inflammatory disorders). In addition, the EULAR EMEUNET (Emerging EULAR Network) organisation of young rheumatologists will also attract young colleagues to the meeting and will disseminate the message that rheumatology is one of the most attractive and successful disciplines of medicine.

The opening plenary session on Wednesday, 14 June, promises a lively atmosphere reflecting highlights of Spanish culture, a look back at EULAR's history over the past 70 years, as well as recognition of past EULAR officers for their important contributions and the announcement of newly elected officers. The young first authors of the highest scoring abstracts in each category will also receive an award.

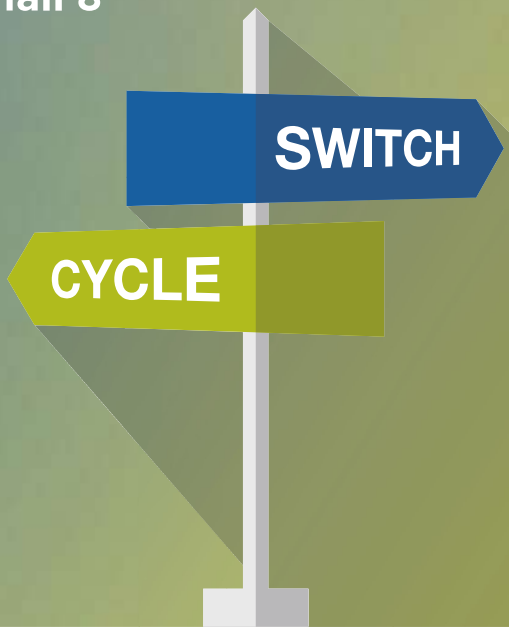
In this special anniversary year, the EULAR congress evening event and dinner will take place on Friday, 16 June, in an impressive location, the historical Castle of Viñuelas, located in the north of the city of Madrid. The venue, surrounded by meadow-oak forest within a protected natural area, is the perfect location to network with friends and colleagues from around the world in a relaxed atmosphere.

We are very happy to visit the city of Madrid for the second time. In 2013, we were impressed by the magnificent ambiance of astonishing architecture, galleries, museums, theatres, and culinary pleasures – and, as a football fan, I must add sports events – under Southern skies. Thus, Madrid will again provide an excellent background for scientific and clinical exchanges, international collaborations, and renewal of friendships. We will take great pleasure in welcoming medical doctors, patients, health professionals and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry to EULAR 2017 and hope that their stay in Madrid will be informative, educational, and, last but not least, enjoyable.

Gerd R. Burmester
President of EULAR

MOVING PAST FIRST BIOLOGIC FAILURE IN RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS: **THE GREAT SWITCH/CYCLE DEBATE**

Thursday 15 June 2017; 17:30–19:00, Hall 8



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Amsterdam Rheumatology and Immunology Center ARC, The Netherlands

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University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Andrea Rubbert-Roth
University of Cologne, Germany

Jacques-Eric Gottenberg
University Hospitals of Strasbourg, France

AGENDA

17:30–17:35	Welcome and introductions	**Ronald van Vollenhoven**
17:35–17:45	Understanding the clinical question	**Juan José Gómez-Reino**
17:45–18:00	The case for cycling to another anti-TNF agent	**Andrea Rubbert-Roth**
18:00–18:15	The case for switching to an agent with an alternative MOA	**Jacques-Eric Gottenberg**
18:15–18:20	Cycling to another anti-TNF: the rebuttal	**Andrea Rubbert-Roth**
18:20–18:25	Switching to an alternative MOA: the rebuttal	**Jacques-Eric Gottenberg**
18:25–18:50	Moderated discussion with faculty and audience Q&A	**All, moderated by Ronald van Vollenhoven**
18:50–19:00	Close	**Ronald van Vollenhoven**

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This programme is hosted by Sanofi Genzyme and Regeneron
Speakers were compensated by Sanofi Genzyme and Regeneron

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Scientific programme features novel treatments, targets in immune pathways

Novel treatments involving the interleukin-17, IL-23, and Janus kinase (JAK) pathways and the growing importance of early diagnosis and treatment will be some of the key themes covered in the scientific programme at this year's EULAR congress in Madrid.

The annual EULAR congress' traditional spirit of giving congress delegates a thorough scientific update of the evidence published in peer-reviewed journals across the broad spectrum of rheumatic diseases is reflected in the wide range of state-of-the-art lectures, clinical and basic science symposia, practical workshops, and special interest sessions running throughout the packed 4-day congress, said Prof. João Eurico Cabral da Fonseca, Chair of the Scientific Programme Committee.

Prof. João E. Fonseca

However, as Prof. Fonseca explained in an interview, the content of the scientific programme is also influenced by the novel developments and innovation that have occurred over the past 12 months.

"Our programme is driven by novelty and not by a particular area we need to cover," said Prof. Fonseca of the rheumatology and metabolic bone disease department at the Santa Maria Hospital in Lisbon.

This year, the EULAR congress organising committees were presented with an abundance of published research on exciting and novel treatments across the spectrum of rheumatologic diseases that is reflected in the abstracts submitted to the congress, Prof. Fonseca said.

"There has been a lot of research in the past year on the IL-17 and IL-23 pathway, on the use of IL-6 inhibitors in vasculitis, and exploring the several diseases in rheumatology where the inhibition of the JAK pathway and other intracellular pathways will be relevant," he said.

Some of these advances and innovation in rheumatology will be highlighted in the many "What Is New" (WIN) and "How to Treat" (HOT) sessions scattered throughout the scientific programme. The criteria for having a HOT or WIN session on a specific subject depends on the evolution of the knowledge in the field. WIN sessions are a review of the evidence that has been published during the year within a specific area of rheumatology, whereas the purpose of the HOT sessions is to update delegates on the new research in that space while also allowing experts to impart some of their hands-on experience in the area.

The sessions are always well received because the speakers are carefully selected by the Scientific Programme Committee, Prof. Fonseca explained.

"For the HOT and WIN sessions, we invite people to present who are not only scientifically active but are clinically active in order to give some input, particularly for the HOT sessions."

This year's delegates certainly won't be disappointed in the lineup of speakers and topics. In WIN and HOT sessions to be held on the afternoon of Saturday, 17 June. Prof. Josef Smolen of the Medical University of Vienna will update delegates on the latest developments in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis.

Prof. Smolen's talk will be followed by a presentation from paediatric rheumatologist Nico Wulffraat of the Netherlands on the latest developments in juvenile idiopathic arthritis.

Another WIN session popular with delegates in previous years is EULAR's collaborative session with the highly reputable international medical journal, The Lancet. The purpose of the collaborative session with The Lancet is twofold: to give delegates an excellent state-of-the-art session on the latest developments in rheumatoid arthritis and also to showcase to the wider global medical community the latest developments in the field of rheumatology, Prof. Fonseca said.

"The long-term goal is to distribute the information we're gathering in rheumatology journals and at the congress to a broader audience," he said, noting the relevance of bringing the innovations in rheumatology to audiences outside the field.

The Lancet session this year is on Saturday morning and will focus on the pathogenesis and treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. High-profile speakers at this session include Prof. Iain McInnes, professor of experimental medicine and rheumatology at the University of Glasgow, who will be presenting a WIN session entitled "Dissecting the pathogenesis of rheumatoid arthritis – what have therapeutics taught us?" and EULAR President Prof. Gerd Burmester, director of the department of rheumatology and clinical immunology and professor of medicine at Charité University Hospital and Free University and Humboldt University of Berlin, who will present the WIN session "Don't delay – new treatment concepts in rheumatoid arthritis."

The importance of diagnosing and treating patients early is a message close to EULAR's heart, Prof. Fonseca said.

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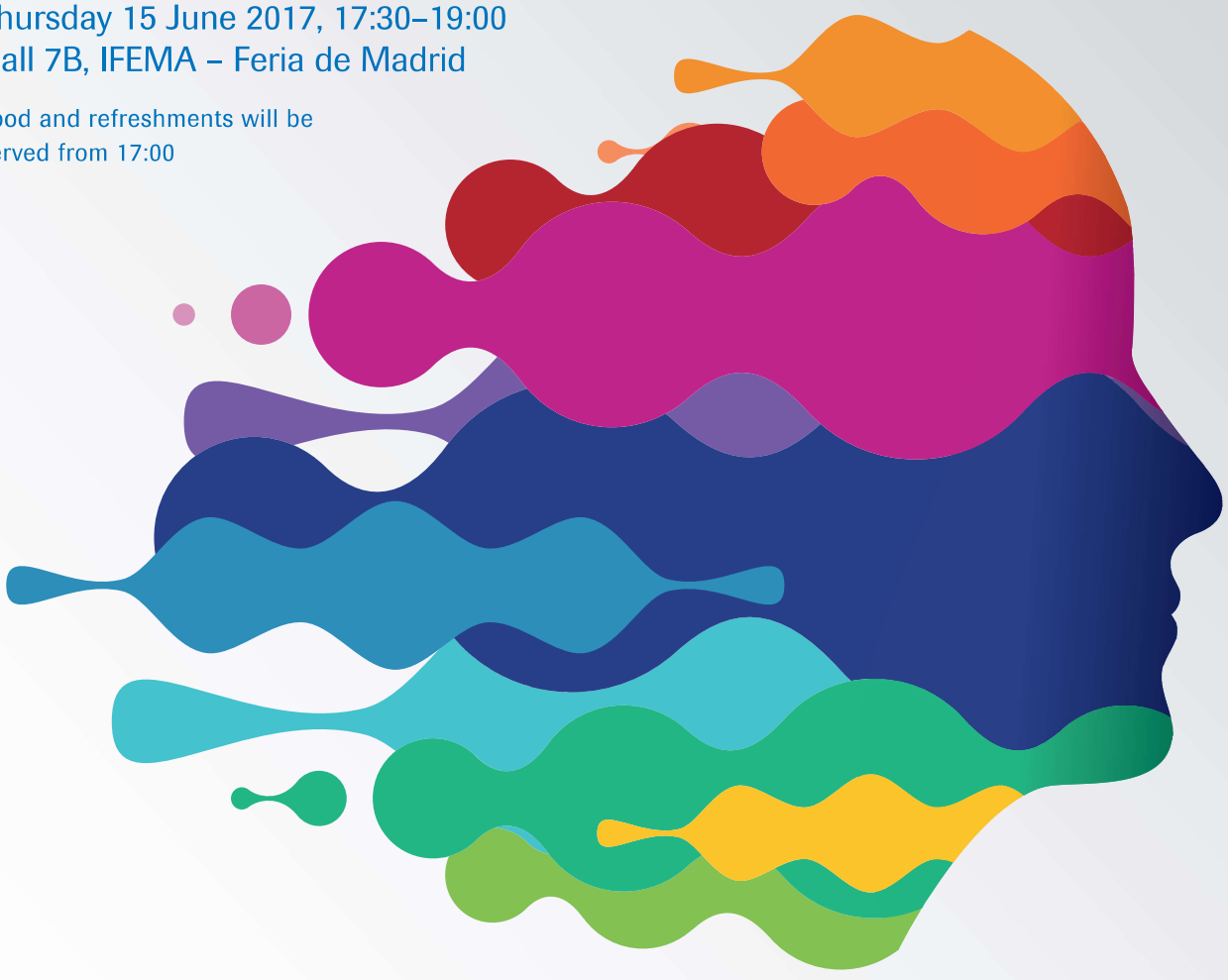
Roche

Roche-sponsored satellite symposium at EULAR 2017

A New Era for Giant Cell Arteritis

Thursday 15 June 2017, 17:30–19:00
Hall 7B, IFEMA – Feria de Madrid

Food and refreshments will be served from 17:00



Chair: Prof John H. Stone, USA

Faculty: Dr Yara Banz, Switzerland
Dr Andreas Diamantopoulos, Norway
Prof Georg Schett, Germany

Based on US rules, this symposium is only intended for physicians practicing outside the USA

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The organisation, which celebrates its 70th birthday this year, will launch its first awareness campaign, "Don't Delay, Connect Today" at the congress. The message of the campaign is that "early diagnosis and access to treatment are the key to preventing further damage and burden on individuals and society."

A highlight for the entire congress and not just the scientific programme is the fact that there are 30% more oral presentations this year, compared with previous years, said Prof. Robert Landewé, Chair of the Abstract Selection Committee and professor of rheumatology at the University of Amsterdam.

Prof. Robert Landewé

He said that while the sessions cover all the major rheumatology disciplines, there are some particularly interesting sessions on psoriatic arthritis and spondyloarthritis.

"There's a lot more interest in these areas than compared to 5 years ago," he said in an interview. On Thursday morning, there will be an abstract session titled "PsA: A fascinating disease," followed by a session the next morning called "PsA: The options grow!"

Delegates can also join a poster tour on Thursday morning to discover exactly what progress has been made in the management of spondyloarthritis.

There are new developments in systemic diseases such as lupus and scleroderma that will be highlighted at this year's congress. However, osteoarthritis is still waiting for its time in the sun, Prof. Landewé said.

"I would say keep an eye on OA [osteoarthritis] over the next few years. ... There are not many sessions this year, but I am certain there are many new developments on the horizon" he said.

Perhaps the pièce de résistance of the scientific programme is the conference highlights session on the last day of the congress. Delegates will need to arrive early to get a seat as this session represents a huge effort by two experts who are selected by the Scientific Programme Committee to summarise the most important research published since EULAR 2016 from a clinical, translational, and basic science perspective.

This year, Prof. Loreto Carmona, an epidemiologist and rheumatologist from the Musculoskeletal Health Institute in Madrid, will take the podium to present the clinical highlights. She will be followed by Prof. Thomas Dörner of the Charité University Hospitals of Berlin, who will present the translational and basic science highlights.

"This session is a very useful one for delegates as it simplifies the major bits of the congress," Prof. Fonseca said.

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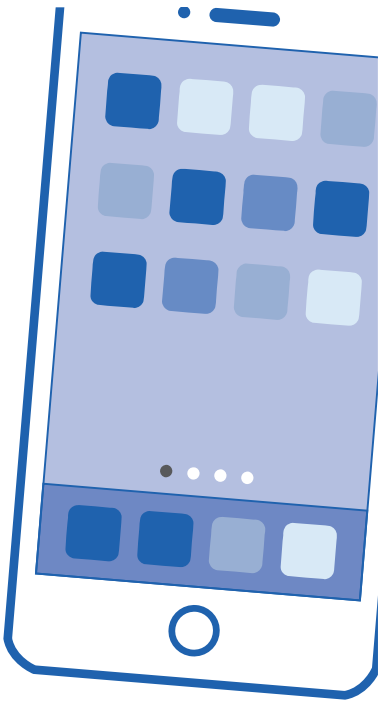

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Health professionals in rheumatology celebrate 30 years as a pillar of EULAR

While EULAR celebrates its 70th anniversary at this year's congress, health professionals in rheumatology are also celebrating 30 years of involvement in the peak European rheumatology professional body.

A particularly poignant moment for rheumatology health professionals will be the congress welcome session on Wednesday afternoon because three of the five founders of the health professionals arm of EULAR, all women in their 80s, will be present to join in the celebrations, said EULAR Health Professionals in Rheumatology Vice-President Prof. Christina Opava.

"It's really exciting because health professionals had to, in some ways, squeeze themselves into the organisation. The pioneers that we have invited had to fight a lot for health professionals in rheumatology to be recognised as a pillar of EULAR," Prof. Opava, professor of physiotherapy at the Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, said in an interview.

"But 30 years later, we are a self-evident part of EULAR and everyone inside and outside the organisation now count on our contribution," she said. "We have our own two subcommittees for research and education, and we are represented in the executive committee."

Since Prof. Opava took up the position of Vice-President 4 years ago, the health professionals in rheumatology arm of EULAR has expanded their membership considerably. It now has 25 member countries, a figure Prof. Opava hopes will continue to expand.

One of the core goals of health professionals in rheumatology, Prof. Opava said, is to work toward a common standard of knowledge and practise for its members. One of the ways they hope to achieve this is through the EULAR online education courses for health professionals and their dedicated classroom in the School of Rheumatology. A Saturday afternoon session will showcase what the course has to offer delegates.

"We launched our online course 2 years ago, and we want more people to know about it," Prof. Opava said.

The course, which can be completed entirely online, and the other activities in the School will help delegates to keep their scientific knowledge and clinical practise current, she noted. The course involves four modules on specific diagnoses for rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, and regional musculoskeletal pain. Another four modules are based on patient management and include individual modules on patient assessment and evaluation, interventions, psychosocial approaches, and evidence-based practise.

Prof. Christina Opava

The next course starts in September and health professionals have 9 months to complete it before they are required to sit for an online examination on the topics they have studied. However, the course can be split over 2 years for health professionals who may not be able to complete the course within the 9-month period, she said.

The course already has accredited physical therapists, nurses, nurse practitioners, occupational therapists, exercise therapists, and podiatrists practicing in the Netherlands, according to Prof. Opava. It is hoped that all EULAR health professional member countries will eventually accredit the online course.

Another standout session from the health professionals in rheumatology programme features a joint session on the transition of people with rheumatic diseases from paediatric care to adult care. The Thursday afternoon session, appropriately titled "To be and to become: transition from paediatric to adult care," is particularly pertinent as young adults are accustomed to a very different model of care, in which they are looked after and generally are not required to take personal responsibility for managing their condition.

"When they reach the age of 18, all of a sudden they are expected to cope with adult care, which is an entirely different experience," Prof. Opava said.

Often, 18-year-old young adults are not independent, so specific measures need to be taken to ensure they don't fall through the gaps, she noted.

This session will provide delegates with an overview of the research in this area, together with best practise evidence from across Europe. Line Raunsbaek-Knudsen of Denmark will discuss her experience of implementing a transition programme for adolescents with juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Wendy Olsder of the Netherlands also will talk about her experience in transitioning from paediatric to adult care. Physiotherapist Dr. Janjaap van der Net of the Netherlands will then round off the session with a talk on how health professionals in rheumatology can promote a healthy lifestyle to their patients.

"I think this session is important as we don't often have sessions on health professionals' clinical practise in paediatrics," Prof. Opava said.

A Friday afternoon session, "Fighting osteoporosis fragilities," will address how to screen for osteoporosis, as well

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PARE programme to highlight equity, engagement

The national organisations of People with Arthritis and Rheumatism in Europe (PARE) will again share a strong, diverse programme this year that underscores crucial long-term goals, such as achieving parity for patients with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) within and beyond the arena of healthcare.

"It is very important to explore the links between equity and economy, to see how austerity measures and cuts to healthcare budgets reflect on equity, and to understand that patients should have the same standards of care, regardless of where they live," Marios Kouloumas, EULAR Vice-President representing national PARE organisations, said in an interview.

Accordingly, a session entitled "Difficult to reach patient groups" will delve into topics such as how education, income level, and disease severity affect one another among patients with RMDs; how patients from diverse ethnic backgrounds can be better engaged in rheumatology care, and how recent immigrants can best be educated about RMDs and the unfamiliar healthcare systems of their new countries.

Other presenters will focus on questions of healthcare access and discuss the socioeconomic determinants of access to biologic therapies and costs of therapeutic innovations as drivers of health inequity. However, the programme takes an even more holistic view, Dieter Wiek, EULAR Standing Committee Chairperson for PARE, explained in an interview. Scheduled sessions will address barriers to employment and job retention, especially among younger patients with RMDs, and how to overcome these obstacles. "Having a job guarantees income and, thus, makes it possible for a person to fully participate in life," Mr. Wiek emphasised. "This is important for all people with RMDs, but, for young people, a good education and access to the job market are essential for the future."

Mental health and psychological well-being are equally important contributors to quality of life, including in the setting of RMDs. "Psychological well-being is one of the most important elements for quality of life, so we are going to explore how the management of psychological status of people with RMDs can be optimised," Mr. Kouloumas said. In a PARE Programme session on optimising psychological well-being for people with RMDs, speakers and attendees will discuss how psychological distress affects well-being and patient self-management, and how rheumatology care teams either support or hinder patient well-being and the capacity for self-management.

For more than a decade, EULAR's

Dieter Wiek

Marios Kouloumas

Standing Committee of PARE has represented national PARE organisations and has worked to ensure that healthcare decision-makers across Europe

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as how to promote balance and prevent falls in the aging population.

The session will also empower health professionals in rheumatology to take an active part in reducing the number of osteoporosis-related fractures. Prof. Opava said.

"I think this will make a huge difference, not only to individual patients but also to reducing societal costs of fragility fractures and [the] consequences," she said.

"Health professionals can apply evidence-based knowledge to their practise to reduce the incidence of osteoporosis-related fractures, regardless of whether they work in a rheumatology practise or are in primary care."

Another session highly relevant to the everyday practise of health professionals in rheumatology is a group of talks on Wednesday afternoon about wearable technologies in 21st-century healthcare.

Practise has moved away from hands-on treatment in the clinic, where health professionals could easily monitor their patients' treatment, noted Prof. Opava, whose background is in physiotherapy. "We're now trying to promote healthy behaviours in our patients' everyday life, and wearables, whether [they are] collecting data through a mobile phone or a wristband, can help us with this," she said.

Wearables also can help patients to track their own behaviours and learn from any patterns that they see. "For example, if they can see that every time it rains, they don't exercise, then they can plan other strategies that they can then apply in those situations," she said.

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1. XELJANZ SmPC. **2.** Singh JA *et al*. *Arthritis Rheumatol* 2016; 68: 1–26. **3.** Smolen JS *et al. Ann Rheum Dis* 2017 Mar 6. [Epub ahead of print]. **4.** van Vollenhoven RF *et al. N Engl J Med* 2012; 367: 508–519. **5.** van der Heijde D *et al. Arthritis Rheum* 2013; 65: 559–570. **6.** Fleischmann R *et al. N Engl J Med* 2012; 367: 495–507. **7.** Strand V *et al. Arthritis Res Ther* 2015; 17: 307–318. **8.** Wollenhaupt J *et al*. Poster presented at: *American College of Rheumatology/Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals Annual Meeting*; November 11–16, Washington DC, USA. **9.** Curtis JR *et al. Clin Rheumatol* 2017; 36: 683–688. **10.** Strand V *et al. Arthritis Res Ther* 2015; 17: 362. **11.** Cohen SB *et al. Ann Rheum Dis* 2017 Jan 31. [Epub ahead of print]. **12.** Burmester GR *et al. Lancet* 2013; 381: 451–460.

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hear directly from patients with RMDs. EULAR received a record number of abstracts for the 2017 Congress, and PARE has been part of that trend, Mr. Wiek said. Both the number and quality of PARE abstract submissions rose substantially this year, he added.

Comorbidities are another major area of concern for people with RMDs and will be an important focus of this year's PARE Programme. A session entitled "Comorbidities: Having one RMD is enough – We don't need anything else," will explore screening and prevention of common comorbidities among patients with RMDs, including cardiovascular disease, infection, depression, and cancer. "Comorbidities are very common for people with RMDs," Mr. Kouloumas said. "Implementing programmes, screening, and close monitoring will prevent many of these codiseases."

The programme will also feature a session for patients on the latest advances in the management of psoriatic arthritis, including interleukin inhibitors and small-molecule therapies that are currently available or on the horizon and the uses of biosimilars in treating RMDs, Mr. Kouloumas noted. "Two very important topics will be featured that affect many people with RMDs across Europe. They will be informed about the latest developments."

Other talks will address equity from the perspective of clinical research. Speakers will explore how patients can successfully engage as partners in rheumatology research, how researchers can systematically engage patients and the public when planning research, challenges encountered by researchers when incorporating patient perspectives into the formal results of clinical studies, and partnering with patients to design and deliver healthcare services. This session is entitled, "Bringing rheumatology research to the next level: Addressing the main challenges of patient partnerships in research and healthcare service design."

Additionally, joint sessions will explore the process of transitioning from paediatric to adult care, as well as the EULAR campaign, "Don't Delay, Connect Today" which aims to expedite the accurate diagnosis of people with RMDs so they can readily access evidence-based therapies in time to halt or dramatically slow disease progression. EULAR will celebrate its 70th anniversary in Madrid, and the PARE Programme will be part of the celebration, Mr. Wiek added. The joint EULAR booth in the EULAR Village will integrate all three EULAR pillars for the first time and will serve as a central meeting point for PARE delegates, he said. Visitors to the booth will be able to obtain their own copy of the EULAR Edgar Stene Prize booklet and other recent publications from patients' organisations throughout Europe.

The PARE Programme also will feature a new workshop on volunteer management, Mr. Kouloumas noted. Posters will be displayed Thursday through Saturday, and two Poster Tours will occur at lunchtime on Thursday and Friday. Attendees can register ahead of time on the day they would like to attend. The end of the congress will include a PARE Highlights session for attendees to catch up on anything they missed.

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‘Don’t Delay, Connect Today’ campaign calls for earlier diagnosis, treatment

People with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) often go undiagnosed for years, missing a critical window for early intervention. A new EULAR campaign will help rheumatologists, general practitioners, policymakers, and patients change that.

Dubbed “Don’t Delay, Connect Today” the campaign calls on stakeholders to work together to hasten both diagnosis and access to evidence-based treatments, EULAR President Gerd R. Burmester said in an interview. “The overall goal of the campaign is to highlight RMDs as major diseases and as a public health concern of pandemic proportions,” he added. “By connecting everyone working in RMDs – from health professional and physician associations, to patient groups – to work toward a united goal, ‘Don’t Delay, Connect Today’ can build a strong platform to achieve positive change.”

Robust evidence now indicates that early treatment of several RMDs increases the chances that patients will either achieve remission or maintain a low level of disease activity, thereby preventing damage to joints and organs, Prof. Burmester noted. “Many disabling and often deadly diseases from earlier years have become manageable in a way that allows affected individuals to lead an almost normal life,” he said.

But too often, this possibility remains out of reach. Recent data from Germany indicate that patients continue to average more than 4 years between RMD symptom onset and diagnosis, said Dieter Wiek, EULAR Standing Committee Chairperson for PARE. “This delay prevents access to optimal treatment and may cause harm that is irreversible,” he emphasised. Delayed treatment also leads to higher rates of absenteeism and earlier retirement, which creates “huge” financial burdens for individuals and countries, he added. “Considering that therapies are available, we must do everything we can to prevent this delay.”

Accordingly, officials highlighted the “Don’t Delay, Connect Today” message at a precongress event in Madrid and again during several roundtables for policymakers and politicians. In Madrid, “Don’t Delay” will receive attention at the opening ceremony and in several sessions. A joint session for scientists, clinicians, and people with RMDs will cover strategies for expediting diagnosis despite limited rheumatologic resources, ways that general practitioners and physiotherapists can support faster, accurate diagnosis, and how national organisations can join the campaign and help spread its message. Also, a PARE programme session entitled “Difficult to reach patient groups” will explore risk factors and solutions for limited access to RMD care, Mr. Wiek said.

The launch of “Don’t Delay, Connect Today” coincides with EULAR’s anniversary, which celebrates 70 years of research and collaboration among physicians, health professionals, and the patient network (PARE), said EULAR President-Elect Johannes Bijlsma. “For all three pillars of EULAR – physicians, patients, and health professionals – there will be specific tool kits presented in Madrid to enforce the “Don’t Delay” message in different contexts,” he added.

Prof. Johannes Bijlsma

The work will continue after Madrid. On 12 October, World Arthritis Day in Brussels “will provide a strong European platform for debate on this topic,” as well as an official video release and social media support, Prof. Burmester said. Also, during the last half of 2017, several webinars will explore best practices for implementing the campaign and involving PARE, health professionals, and scientific societies, he added. “We are encouraging all national societies in rheumatology to attend the webinars and to work to find ways to implement this campaign at the national level.”

EULAR celebrates 70th anniversary

EULAR turns 70 this year, and several events will help members celebrate the occasion in Madrid.

An e-brochure and a walkway in the convention centre will feature a timeline of milestones, and a photo exhibition will share medical devices used by rheumatologists in the 1940s and 1950s, EULAR Secretariat Executive Director Julia Rautenstrauch said in an interview. The EULAR website also features a 2017 anniversary quiz and awards monthly prizes to winners.

At its founding in 1947, EULAR aimed to coordinate the therapeutic and research activities of its members' scientific and social organisations, Prof. Rautenstrauch explained. "From the very beginning, a broad definition of rheumatic diseases was adopted, with a multidisciplinary approach that was very innovative at the time," she said.

Today, EULAR's mission statement reflects many of those original goals – to represent diverse stakeholders, reduce the burden of rheumatic diseases on the individual and society, and foster excellence in education and research in the field of rheumatology, according to Dr. Rautenstrauch. Likewise, EULAR's objectives for 2017 underscore its historic emphasis not only on basic and clinical research but also on high-quality education for providers and patients, a broad reach and range of offerings at the congress, and both national and European Union–level advocacy, she added.

In addition to its diverse and comprehensive recommendations on treating rheumatic diseases, EULAR has consistently prioritised educational activities, Dr. Rautenstrauch said. "With a broad portfolio of high-level educational offerings, such as live courses and online courses, EULAR is continuously educating rheumatologists and other health professionals to keep them abreast of the highest standards of medicine," she said. "I am quite sure that EULAR will become the preeminent global provider of education in rheumatology in the near future. With digitisation, [we] will be able to offer high-standard medical education for a broad audience, not only in Europe but also for people in low- and middle-income countries all over the world."

Prof. Maurizio Cutolo

Julia Rautenstrauch

Prof. Maurizio Cutolo, EULAR Past-President and Past-Chairman of the International League of Associations for Rheumatology, echoed that prediction. "Major world rheumatology leagues such as PANLAR [Pan-American League of Associations for Rheumatology], AFLAR [African League of Associations for Rheumatology], and of course the ACR [American College of Rheumatology] have requested 'EULAR Symposia' at their annual meetings," he said. "Five to 10 years from now, we probably will move to a more extensive network and an online system to share the congress, especially for geographical and economic reasons."

When founded, EULAR included the national rheumatology organisations of 19 countries in Europe. Seven decades later, the league has 100 member organisations from 45 countries, according to Dr. Rautenstrauch. Likewise, while the very first congress in Copenhagen included 200 delegates from 16 countries, the congress in Madrid will welcome some 14,000 delegates from more than 120 countries, Prof. Cutolo said.

EULAR's growth spurred it to begin holding annual congresses in 2000, he noted. "In 2017, almost 4,800 abstracts were submitted," he said. "Abstracts from attendees from outside Europe are increasing, and today represent more than 40% of submissions." Likewise, EULAR's journal, Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases, now tops the field with a record impact factor of 12.384. Other recent accomplishments include EULAR's launch of its School of Rheumatology and its work to promote safe, easily handled imaging tools that support the crucial early diagnosis of RMDs, including power Doppler ultrasonography and skin and nailfold capillaroscopy, he added.

Altogether, EULAR's history highlights its "unique asset – the effective and close cooperation of professionals and patients under one roof," Dr. Rautenstrauch said. A multidisciplinary approach and the systematic inclusion of the perspectives of patients in all decisions are factors that contribute to EULAR's outstanding performance, not only in research but also politically at the level of the European Union, she said. "In particular, EULAR's recommendations for the management of diseases are widely accepted, and have had a great impact on national treatment policies, and thus on patients' everyday lives."

Roche-sponsored satellite symposium at EULAR 2017

From Evolution to Revolution in Treatment of RA Patients

Friday 16 June 2017, 08:15–09:45
N101/N102, IFEMA – Feria de Madrid

Food and refreshments will be served from 07:45

Chair: Dr José María Álvaro-Gracia, Spain

Faculty: Prof Ernest Choy, UK
Prof Leslie Harrold, USA
Dr David Lee, Switzerland
Prof Andrea Rubbert-Roth, Germany

Based on US rules, this symposium is only intended for physicians practicing outside the USA

NP/ACTE/1704/0008 Date of preparation: April 2017

RheumaMap to support 'pan-European' research and funding

Population ageing within and beyond Europe makes research on rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) more important than ever. At the same time, shortages in funding and other resources have slowed advances in relevant basic and clinical research. A new strategy called RheumaMap takes a coordinated approach to tackling these challenges, as attendees will learn at the EULAR congress in Madrid.

Prof. Iain McInnes

Neil Betteridge

Created by a group of international experts under the leadership of EULAR Treasurer Prof. Iain McInnes, RheumaMap defines key issues and unmet needs affecting the most common RMDs that merit the most resources in the next decade. Goals include supporting advocacy activities, informing policymakers and other stakeholders about the pressing need for cures, and promoting research that effectively cuts the severity and frequency of flares and improves quality life when cures are out of reach. Additional priorities include developing models for cost-effective care across the European Union that incorporate employability and other socioeconomic factors into a holistic lens of care and helping people with RMDs participate actively in family and social life.

Overall, RheumaMap aims to facilitate integrated, "pan-European" strategies to advance RMD research and innovation, Neil Betteridge, liaison officer for EULAR Public Affairs, said in an interview. "In recent years, EULAR has informed policymakers in Brussels that we recognise the need for a strategic approach to research funding," he added. "We believe this document makes an important contribution."

RheumaMap principally targets the EU for funding, Prof. McInnes noted. But "we hope that RheumaMap will be instructive for all research funders, from European-level agencies to national and charitable agencies to relevant industry partners," he added. Ultimately, the goal is to connect RMD investigators with as many opportunities for research support as possible, he said.

Accordingly, a session in Madrid will cover EU funding opportunities that support RMD research and innovation and will describe strategies for obtaining funding and recent success stories. "This also is an opportunity for delegates to learn about and contribute to the critical research questions that we will take to major funders in the next few years," Prof. McInnes said.

Indeed, RheumaMap makes recommendations for research on more than a dozen RMDs, Mr. Betteridge said. "As the principal cause of disability in Europe and worldwide, and one of the most prevalent chronic conditions, RMDs represent an enormous burden to individuals and societies," he added. "However, despite important developments in recent years, our capacity to understand, diagnose, prevent, and effectively treat RMDs is still limited, even for the commonest RMDs, such as osteoarthritis, back pain, or fibromyalgia."

Despite notable progress in understanding the biological mechanisms that lead to RMDs, their genetic and environmental causes remain unknown, and as a result, prevention is challenging or even impossible, notes RheumaMap's Statement of Purpose. Novel therapies have significantly improved outcomes in some RMDs, but costs of treatment often are individually and societally unsustainable. Other RMDs remain very difficult to treat. Thus, the field urgently requires "a rigorous, dynamic, and insightful research programme, ranging from the molecule to the population," the statement emphasises.

By necessity, RheumaMap is a "living document" that will be updated in real time going forward, Prof. McInnes said. "This will allow interested parties across RMD constituencies to input and develop the research agenda," he added. "Five years from now, RheumaMap should lay out even more ambitious objectives and challenges for the research community, built on the successes we anticipate in the next few years."

Prof. McInnes reported having received honoraria or research funding from AbbVie, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Pfizer, Janssen, Novartis, Lilly, AstraZeneca, Celgene, UCB, and Roche. Mr. Betteridge is director of Neil Betteridge Associates, which works with public and private entities involved in health policy.

The changing face of juvenile idiopathic arthritis sets the tone for paediatric sessions

The heterogeneous nature of juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), the use of biologics in childhood rheumatic diseases, and a look at the long-term outcomes for children with JIA are just some of the highlights from the paediatric rheumatology sessions at this year's EULAR congress.

EULAR Standing Committee Chairperson for Paediatric Rheumatology Prof. Tadej Avcin said that a bench-to-bedside session on the heterogeneity of JIA on Thursday afternoon would explore the biologic basis of the disease, the role of cytokine profiling, and the clinical variability in the disease.

"The classification of children with JIA is an ongoing process. ... For example, we know that children with early-onset antinuclear antibody–positive oligoarthritis are different from children with late-onset ANA-negative arthritis," Prof. Avcin said in an interview.

"By highlighting the heterogeneity of JIA, we hope this session will contribute to the further understanding of differences between JIA subtypes, as well as contribute some scientific background for the further classification of children with JIA," he said.

Another "not to miss" session from the paediatric programme that will be held on Friday afternoon is the open issues session on the use of biologic agents in JIA, according to Prof. Avcin, professor of paediatrics and head of the department of allergology, rheumatology, and clinical immunology at University Children's Hospital, University Medical Center, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Speaking on the long-term side effects of biologics, Dr. Joost Swart from Utrecht in the Netherlands will present some novel data from the large ongoing pharmacovigilance project Pharmachild, which follows children aged 3-10 years who have been treated with methotrexate or a biologic.

At the same session, Prof. Pierre Quartier from Paris will take delegates through data on autoimmune phenomena that can occur in children who are on biologic treatment.

"We know that, in treating children with biologics, they can sometimes develop antidrug antibodies and various induced autoimmune phenomena. We would like to highlight this aspect so that physicians can have more of an overview of possible immune-mediated adverse effects in their patients," Prof. Avcin said.

The session will also address what Prof. Avcin describes as an emerging and important clinical question: When and how do you discontinue treatment in children with sustained remission?

It's a question he hopes Prof. Gerd Horneff from Germany will be able to shed some light on when he shares data on how frequently children experience disease flares after discontinuing treatment.

Another paediatric highlight is a Saturday morning session that will address the long-term outcomes of children with JIA.

A presentation by Dr. Marion van Rossum from the Netherlands will explore whether there are certain clinical or laboratory markers that can help identify children who are more likely to respond well to treatment, compared with other children.

Prof. Dirk Foell from Germany will follow with a session on immunological markers of remission in JIA.

As Prof. Avcin explains, immunological markers such as S100 proteins have shown promise as a biomarker of subclinical active disease.

"Even if a child appears to have clinically inactive disease, elevated levels of these markers may help predict which children will remain in remission after discontinuing treatment and which children may be at an increased risk of a disease flare," he said.

Rounding off the session, Dr. Berit Flato from Norway will present delegates with data from an epidemiological study of long-term outcomes of children with JIA as they move into adulthood.

Prof. Tadej Avcin

"Dr. Flato will present the long-term outcome data from children followed for up to 20 years," Prof. Avcin said. "Biologics have been in paediatric rheumatology for around 17 years so we will be able to see what is the outcome of children with JIA moving into adulthood with our current treatment protocols."

In the afternoon, on Friday, paediatric experts will team up with their adult rheumatology colleagues in a "challenges in clinical practice" session to update delegates on life-threatening presentations of rheumatic diseases.

"We will highlight life-threatening presentations that are of particular interest in children, like macrophage activation syndrome and complications of systemic connective tissue diseases and systemic vasculitides like Kawasaki disease and Takayasu's arteritis," Prof. Avcin said.

EULAR School of Rheumatology officially launches

The EULAR School of Rheumatology officially launches in June 2017, and delegates attending this year's congress in Madrid will be given complementary membership for the first year.

EULAR already offers a variety of educational activities, such as e-learning, educational courses, webinars, and the EULAR Textbook on Rheumatic Diseases. The new EULAR School of Rheumatology now brings all of those educational offerings under one roof via an individual membership and integrates them with a number of new initiatives and projects, said Prof. Annamaria Iagnocco, Chair of the EULAR Standing Committee for Education and Training and Headmaster of the EULAR School of Rheumatology.

The EULAR School of Rheumatology consists of seven virtual "classrooms" dedicated to addressing the educational needs of specific audiences, represented by medical students or undergraduates, teachers, trainees and fellows, rheumatologists, researchers, allied healthcare professionals, and people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases.

"These classrooms work to improve the existing EULAR educational offerings and help to develop new initiatives," said Prof. Iagnocco, professor of rheumatology at the University of Turin. "This is really a new way of working in the field of education and training and will increase the opportunities for physicians, health professionals in rheumatology, and people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases."

Becoming a member of the school will enable individuals to set up their own profile, which will give them enhanced access to EULAR education programmes. Members will be able to register for upcoming events and gain EULAR credits for participating in educational activities that can later be used to access other resources, such as online courses or EULAR publications.

The credits given are specific to EULAR but will use the same system that is used for many continuing medical education point systems. Namely, the number of hours spent on an activity will be translated into EULAR credits.

"Members will be given an overview of any courses that they have attended and can download their own certificates," Prof. Iagnocco said in an interview.

Prof. Annamaria Iagnocco

Members of the school will also be able to freely access all of the content contained within the new EULAR app that will be launched at the congress. The existing app that provides congress information will be updated to include details of EULAR classification criteria and treatment recommendations, a pocket e-book on rheumatology, and access to the EULAR's RMD Open journal, for instance. Importantly, all of the app content will be accessible also when there is no available Internet connection.

Just before the congress, there will be sessions around the launch of the school, such as a pilot examination for the EULAR European Certificate of Rheumatology.

"EULAR has a far-reaching goal to be the preeminent provider of education in rheumatology throughout the world," Prof. Gerd R. Burmester, President of EULAR, said in an interview.

EULAR is in a unique position to provide such education as it has more than 120 member organisations that include scientific societies, allied healthcare professional organisations, patient associations, and pharmaceutical companies covering most European countries, cultures, and languages.

While the EULAR School of Rheumatology will initially provide all educational content in English, the plan is to make content available in all members' native languages as time moves on, said Prof. Burmester, director of the department of rheumatology and clinical immunology and professor of medicine at Charité University Hospital and Free University and Humboldt University of Berlin.

"Increasingly, new technologies are coming along and new tools are being developed, and in order to accommodate these, we need not just a secretariat but we need a formal school," Prof. Burmester observed. "The aim is to have the best possible and most comprehensive way to educate physicians, scientists, health professionals, and patients to better the lives of the patients."

To access the school, you need to become a member. This is because, unlike the American College of Rheumatology, in which individuals are members, in EULAR, it is the organisations that are members and not individuals. Although membership will ultimately need to be paid for, the aim is to keep the cost as low as possible, and some elements of the school, such as the image library, will remain free.

There will be different levels of membership available after the free trial ends, Prof. Johannes W.J. Bijlsma, President-elect of EULAR, said in a separate interview. This will be introduced by the time of the next congress in Amsterdam in 2018.

"EULAR thinks it is very important to deliver the best educational materials in the field of rheumatology, and we already provide online courses that have been running for more than 10 years," said Prof. Bijlsma, professor of rheumatology at the University Medical Centre Utrecht in the Netherlands.

EMEUNET tailors EULAR experience for young rheumatologists

Young rheumatologists and researchers will find plenty of relevant content at EULAR, thanks to a dedicated presentation track. Other tailored opportunities include networking events, mentorship for first-time attendees to help them make the most of their EULAR experience, and a unique opportunity for small group discussion and networking with key opinion leaders in rheumatology in the so-called mentor-mentee meetings.

The Young Rheumatologists track provides three sessions with a special focus on researchers and clinicians who are early in their careers, Dr. Sofia Ramiro explained in an interview. Dr. Ramiro chairs the steering committee of the Emerging Eular Network (EMEUNET), a network of young clinicians and researchers in the field of rheumatology in Europe.

One session will focus on the importance of the systematic literature review, highlighting the movement of knowledge from science to clinical practice. "The idea is that there will be a presentation on how to start a systematic literature review," said Dr. Ramiro of Leiden (the Netherlands) University Medical Centre. Attendees will learn about the methodology, followed by a presentation by a EULAR expert "telling us how the link is made in science and clinical practice – how we go from the systematic literature review to the formulation of recommendations," Dr. Ramiro said. The session will conclude with discussion of the practicalities of implementing guidelines in clinical practice, connecting the dots from bench to bedside. "This could be a very useful lecture for every young rheumatologist," Dr. Ramiro said, since it will show "how to look for the literature and look for the evidence to answer the questions we have about our patients in daily clinical practice."

Dr. Sofia Ramiro

Another session will zero in on osteoarthritis, vasculitis, spondyloarthritis, and rheumatoid arthritis, with a shorter lecture format and more time left for a question-and-answer session and discussion. With a group of younger rheumatologists in attendance, "the sessions are somewhat more informal," promoting a comfortable and interactive environment for discussion and learning, Dr. Ramiro said.

The third session in the Young Rheumatologists track will consist of case discussions focused on how to counsel and take care of women who have rheumatoid arthritis and would like to become pregnant. Two patient cases will be presented and discussed by leaders in the field. "Again, the idea is to make these presentations as real-world as possible," Dr. Ramiro said.

The EMEUNET booth will be in the EULAR Village, and, for the first time, the booth will be incorporated in the EULAR booth, as a "pillar" under the bigger EULAR umbrella. Dr. Ramiro said to be sure to stay tuned for a surprise associated with EULAR's 70th anniversary. On Thursday evening, EMEUNET will host a networking event. Watch the EMEUNET website and social media for details about time and venue.

During the event, mentor-mentee meetings organised by EMEUNET link five to six young attendees with mentors, according to area of interest. Signup is available online, allowing small group discussion with leaders in academic rheumatology. This year, meetings will be led by Prof. Iain McInnes (Glasgow, Scotland), Prof. Josef Smolen (Vienna), and Prof. William Dixon (Manchester, England). Mentorship topics can include the incorporation of research into a clinical career, general career advice, and insight into international collaboration, Dr. Ramiro said.

"These are usually very well-attended meetings and very popular," she said. "People who have participated in them always give us very good feedback and are very enthusiastic about how easily accessible these very famous key opinion leaders are and what good advice they give to them."

Finally, the Ambassador program helps first-time attendees get the most out of EULAR. "I think that we all know that the first time we attend such a huge conference the experience can be daunting," Dr. Ramiro said. Now in its third year, the Ambassador program pairs an EMEUNET member with up to six first-timers. The Ambassador helps the newcomers decide which sessions to attend and remains available through mobile phone, social media, and the meeting app throughout the meeting.

All of EMEUNET's activities during EULAR support the organisation's aim of "widening collaboration and fostering collaboration among young researchers and clinicians," Dr. Ramiro said. "The ultimate aim is to improve and promote education in the area of our diseases and to foster research collaborations," she said of the 1,500-member strong organisation.

EULAR Standing Committees make their impacts felt

Throughout the EULAR congress in Madrid, the latest findings from the eight EULAR Standing Committees will be woven into the Scientific Programme.

"The EULAR Standing Committees set the ground rules, but the EULAR Scientific Programme Committee sets the agenda for the annual meeting," Prof. Gerd Rüdiger Burmester, President of EULAR, said in an interview.

To ensure that the latest findings from each Committee are included at each annual congress, the Chairpersons of each Standing Committee sit on the Scientific Programme Committee. Highlights to be presented at this year's congress include updates from the Standing Committee for Clinical Affairs, the Standing Committee on Investigative Rheumatology, and the Standing Committee of People with Arthritis/Rheumatism in Europe (PARE).

Prof. Gerd R. Burmester

"The most visibly active of the EULAR Standing Committees is the Standing Committee for Clinical Affairs," Prof. Burmester said. This Standing Committee has generated "a tremendous number" of new treatment recommendations which can be found on the EULAR website.

These recommendations set the standard of how to treat patients with various diseases and this year there has been a particular focus on early arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, spondyloarthritis, vasculitis, and the very early phases of arthritis in which a diagnosis may only just be suspected, added Prof. Burmester, director of the department of rheumatology and clinical immunology and professor of medicine at Charité University Hospital and Free University and Humboldt University of Berlin.

Ongoing initiatives of the Standing Committee for Clinical Affairs include updating guidelines on the vaccination of patients with rheumatic diseases and the management of Behçet's disease and developing new guidance on how to manage Sjögren's syndrome, grade lupus flare response measurements, and validate a new patient-reported questionnaire to estimate individuals' vitamin D status.

The Standing Committee on Investigative Rheumatology is also setting standards, especially with regard to autoantibody detection and laboratory standards. This Standing Committee seeks to enhance knowledge about the underlying genetic, molecular, and cellular basis of rheumatic diseases to enable early detection, diagnosis, and ultimately treatment.

One of the jobs of this EULAR Standing Committee is to ensure that laboratory tests are being consistently used and address any issues with quality assurance. As such, the Committee meets regularly to discuss how to improve results at laboratories that may be underperforming, compared with other laboratories across Europe.

"We also have a very active Standing Committee on Epidemiology and Health Services Research," Prof. Burmester said. "They are organising, as they did last year, a meeting of all the registries in Europe that are interested in collecting information on adverse events and other factors occurring during treatment with biologics and now the newer JAK inhibitors."

The Standing Committee of PARE and Standing Committee for Clinical Affairs are behind the central EULAR campaign this year – "Don't Delay, Connect Today" – which will be launched in Madrid.

The "Don't Delay" part of the campaign slogan refers to the need for people to be educated enough to be able to recognise that joint symptoms could be the start of arthritis or musculoskeletal disease and not to delay seeing a primary care doctor. It also refers to the need for the primary care doctor to not delay in seeking a referral to a rheumatologist and then to the rheumatologist in starting treatment as early as possible. Then the "Connect Today" part of the slogan refers to connecting patients and healthcare professionals with each other so that patients get peer support and health professionals have the support of a network to provide patients with the best possible treatment.

There will be lots of activities around the "Don't Delay, Connect Today" theme during the congress and there will be a tool kit for EULAR member organisations to use to adapt and translate the campaign for use in their respective countries.

There will also be a large event held at the railway station in Madrid on 13 June, the day before the meeting officially opens, said Prof. Johannes W.J. Bijlsma, President-elect of EULAR, in a separate interview. The campaign will be highlighted during the opening ceremony.

"The hope is to get a lot of people behind this campaign," said Prof. Bijlsma, professor of rheumatology at the Univer-

sity Medical Center Utrecht in the Netherlands. "We hope that the tool kit will enable countries to develop national campaigns and activities to be held throughout the following year."

"Each Standing Committee has a business meeting and organises its own activities at the congress each year," Prof. Bijlsma said. For instance, the Standing Committee on Education and Training is of course launching the EULAR School of Rheumatology during the meeting in Madrid.

The Standing Committee on Investigative Rheumatology is also very active and will present information around the EULAR Research Roadmap, called "RheumaMap," that will guide the scientific agenda for the coming years, he said.

It is also important to remember that all the EULAR Standing Committees can have one representative from each member country attend its business meeting at the congress each year. Individuals with the necessary expertise or skills can be put forward by their respective organisations or invited by the Chair of each Committee to attend.

"We always want to invite the countries to send a delegate because the more people that are involved, the better the ideas," Prof. Bijlsma said.

Standing committees:

Clinical Affairs
- Chair: Prof. Ronald van Vollenhoven, Sweden
- Chair-elect: Prof. Ulf Müller-Ladner, Germany

Education and Training
- Chair: Prof. Annamaria Iagnocco, Italy
- Chair-elect: Prof. Nemanja Damjanov, Serbia

Epidemiology and Health Services Research
- Chair: Dr. Axel Finckh, Switzerland
- Chair-elect: Prof. Laure Gossec, France

Health Professionals in Rheumatology
- Chair: Dr. Annette de Thurah, Denmark
- Past Chair: Prof. Anthony Redmond, UK

Investigative Rheumatology
- Chair: Prof. Xavier Mariette, France
- Past chair: Prof. Rik Lories, Belgium

Musculoskeletal Imaging
- Chair: Dr. Lene Terslev, Denmark
- Past chair: Dr. Esperanza Naredo, Spain

Paediatric Rheumatology
- Chair: Prof. Tadej Avcin, Slovenia
- Chair-elect: Prof. Berent Prakken, the Netherlands

People with Arthritis/Rheumatism in Europe (PARE)
- Dieter Wiek, Chair Standing Committee of PARE, Germany
- Marios Kouloumas, EULAR Vice President representing PARE, Cyprus
- Nele Caeyers, Chair-elect, Belgium
- Petra Balazova, YoungPARE, Slovakia
- Boryana Boteva, Bulgaria
- Elsa Mateus, Portugal
- Kristijonas Mazuras, Lithuania
- Polina Pchelnikova, Russia

EULAR Congress News Preview Edition

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