

EULAR/ACR collaborative projects

Standardized Operating Procedures (SOP)

Version October 2008

I. Rationale

- The practice and science of Rheumatology is rapidly changing, which presents important opportunities and challenges;
- The Rheumatology community can best take advantage of these changes by working collaboratively;
- The ACR and EULAR represent two of the preeminent organizations representing clinical rheumatologists and the researchers focused on rheumatic diseases.
- The ACR and EULAR desire a transparent and collaborative relationship.

II. Objectives

Two main objectives:

- To ensure communication and transparency between the two societies with regard to the ongoing and planned activities;
- To collaborate on specific projects (called in the following part of this document: “EULAR/ACR initiative”).

III. Process of communication between the two societies

- EULAR Executive Committee has decided to nominate a “EULAR-ACR liaison person” (e.g. Maxime Dougados)
- The ESCISIT (now called ESCCA for EULAR Standing Committee for Clinical Affairs) chair is a member of ACR Criteria Subcommittee and regularly receives all meeting notices, minutes, and committee correspondence;
- The ACR Criteria Subcommittee chair is a member of ESCCA and of the ESCE (EULAR Standing Committee of Epidemiology) and regularly receives all meeting notices, minutes, and committee correspondence;
- The EULAR Executive Committee quality liaison is an invited guest to the ACR Quality of Care Committee (QOC) and regularly receives all meeting notices, minutes, and committee correspondence; and

- The ACR QOC chair is an invited guest to the EULAR Standing Committee on Epidemiology and regularly receives all meeting notices, minutes and committee correspondence.

IV. The different steps of a joint EULAR/ACR initiative

IV.A. Support

The two organizations seek collaboration for

- Development and validation of criteria sets
- Development of recommendations for conducting clinical trials

IVB. Selection of the project

This selection consists in a two-step approach.

IV.B.1. Selection of a field of interest

Two months prior the bi-annual ACR-QOC/Criteria Subcommittee-ESCCA/ESCE leadership meeting (the day before the EULAR meeting and the ACR meeting), the ACR-QOC/Criteria Subcommittee and ESCCA/ESCE chairpersons propose a list of potential projects based on their internal discussion with their respective members.

Such list of potential projects is discussed during the bi-annual ACR-QOC/Criteria Subcommittee-ESCCA/ESCE leadership meetings.

In case of consensus, one to three potential projects (with a ranking order of preference of those present) are presented at the joint ACR-EULAR Executive Committee/Board meeting (usually also the day before the opening of the ACR and/or EULAR meetings).

In case of agreement, such potential project is presented at the respective boards based on the policy of the society (for example, at the EULAR level, such project has to be endorsed by the EULAR Executive Committee; at the ACR level, such project has to be approved by the ACR Board of Directors).

In case of final approval by the two respective organizations, the ESCCA, ESCE, ACR-QOC and Criteria Subcommittee leadership are immediately informed of such approval together with the financial support given by the two societies (see section IV.C.1.) and the next step can start.

IV.B.2. Selection of the investigators

As soon as an agreement between ACR and EULAR has been obtained concerning both the title of the project (see section IV.C.4.b below) and the financial support (see section

IV.C.1. below), a Request For Proposal (RFP) is prepared jointly by ESCCA, ESCE and ACR-QOC/Criteria Subcommittee.

As soon as such document receives the agreement of these committees, such RFP will appear both on the EULAR and the ACR websites.

Investigators interested in such project are invited to submit a detailed application which comprises 2 parts (a scientific part and an administrative one concerning the *a priori* agreement of the current EULAR-ACR policy and in particular the points discussed in section IV of this document).

The received submitted projects are reviewed *via* ACR-QOC/Criteria Subcommittee and ESCCA/ESCE by at least:

- Two reviewer members of the committee (one from ESCCA/ESCE, one from ACR-QOC/Criteria Subcommittee)
- Four external reviewers (2 Europeans designated by the ESCCA/ESCE chairpersons and 2 Americans designated by the ACR-QOC/Criteria Subcommittee chairpersons)
- The final decision is taken by a consensus across the ESCCA/ESCE and ACR-QOC/Criteria Subcommittee.

IV.C. Points to consider for getting an endorsement

IV.C.1. *Financial support / progress reports / timelines*

- All these projects are exclusively financially supported by EULAR and ACR, unless other arrangements are approved by both organizations.
- Contributions by both organizations will be equal.
- Other than an initial payment, distribution of funds will be linked to receipt and approval of satisfactory progress reports.
- A single standardized format will be used for all progress reports, which will be submitted jointly to the ACR and EULAR by project PIs.
- Project timelines will include expectations for interim publications or meeting presentations, providing details of when and where these will occur.
- At the beginning of each project, the above items will be agreed upon between the ACR, EULAR and the project PI in writing. A letter of agreement outlining these items will be signed by all parties before the project begins. It will be used as a project guide for follow-up and accountability.

IV.C.2. *Investigators group*

Special emphasis will be given to proposals from investigator groups that include both European and North American scientists and clinicians.

IV.C.3. *Methodological aspects*

The application should consider the current EULAR and/or ACR points to consider *e.g.*

1. EULAR standardized operating procedures for the elaboration, evaluation, dissemination and implementation of recommendations endorsed by the EULAR standing committees. Dougados M, Betteridge N, Burmester GR, Euller-Ziegler L, Guillemin F, Hirvonen J, Lloyd J, Ozen S, da Silva JA, Emery P, Kalden JR, Kvien T, Matucci-Cerini M, Smolen J; EULAR. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2004;63:1172-6.
2. Classification criteria in rheumatic diseases: a review of methodological properties. Johnson SR, Goek ON, Singh-Grewal D, Viad SC, Feldman BM, Felson DT, Hawker GA, Singh JA, Solomon DH. *Arthritis Rheum* 2007;57:1119-33.
3. Classification criteria for rheumatic diseases: why and how? Dougados M, Gossec L. *Arthritis Rheum* 2007;57:1112-5.

IV.C.4. *Publications*

IV.C.4.a. Journal

- Products will be published simultaneously in both *Arthritis Care & Research* and *Annals of Rheumatic Disease*.
- The articles in each journal will have identical content. Minor linguistic adjustments will be allowed between the two journals (*i.e.*, differences in British *versus* American spelling); however, the content will be identical.
- A statement similar to: “This article is published simultaneously in the March 2008 issue of *Arthritis Care & Research* (*Arthritis Rheum* 200X:XX:pages)” should be added to the footnotes of both articles.

IV.C.4.b. Title

- The title will have the organization names at the end of the title and will refer to the concept of collaboration between the two societies (for example: gout responder criteria: an ACR-EULAR collaborative initiative).
- The title will be identical in both articles (*e.g.* *Arthritis Care and Research* and *Annals of Rheumatic Diseases*). The order of the organization names will be the same in both articles so that the title remains identical in both articles. The order will be agreed upon before the project begins (*i.e.* before the RFP is distributed).

IV.C.4.c. Authorship

- All documents will be individually authored.

- Individuals will be listed as authors according to the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals – <http://www.icmje.org/#author>
- Author lists will reflect a balance between ACR and EULAR representatives, to help convey the collaborative nature of the joint project to readers.
- The articles in each journal will have identical author lists.

IV.C.4.d. Submission

The manuscript summarizing the results of the initiative has to be written under the responsibility of the Principal Investigator.

The final draft has to be submitted to both appropriate committees (*e.g.* ESCCA/ESCE and ACR-QOC/Criteria Subcommittee) before sending it to the journal.

The Chairpersons of the Committees of both organizations will have the responsibility to get an initial authorization by the EULAR Steering Committee and ACR before authorizing the principal investigator to submit to the agreed upon journal.

For example, at the EULAR level, such manuscript has to be sent to all the EULAR Steering Committee members and EULAR Standing Committee chairpersons who have 2 weeks to give their comments/refusal/approval. At the ACR level, this preliminary authorization to submit does not suggest final Board approval. The ACR Board reviews manuscripts for final ACR endorsement after they have been reviewed and revised.

The chairperson of either ESCCA or ACR Criteria Subcommittee will inform the editors of both journals of such approval to submit, depending on which organization is taking the lead on manuscript review/copyediting (see section IV.C.4.e. below); whichever organization is taking the lead, that chairperson will be responsible for this task.

IV.C.4.e. Manuscript review/copyediting process

- One journal will be responsible for copyediting the article. The organization whose name appears first in the title of each article will take the lead in copyediting that particular article.
- The journal responsible for the copyediting of each particular article will also handle the author corrections and proofing for that article.
- The journal responsible for the copyediting will supply the other journal with copies of the article at each stage of the production process (*i.e.*, original submission, typeset copy, corrected copy, and final copy) so that the other journal can maintain its production schedule.
- One journal will handle the peer review process. Both journals will suggest reviewers (*i.e.*, AC&R will suggest U.S. reviewers, *Annals* will suggest European reviewers).

- The managing editors of both journals will discuss production schedules, so that printing deadlines for each journal can be coordinated.
- Articles will be given publication priority in order to publish as quickly as possible.
- Disclosure and conflict of interest forms for the journal responsible for the copyediting of each particular article will be used and reported in each journal's format. Journals will exchange forms prior to any actual submission so that additional information can be added to one or the other if needed.