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NURSES CRUCIAL IN IMPROVING UPTAKE OF POTENTIALLY LIFE-SAVING VACCINE IN VULNERABLE RHEUMATIC PATIENTS

Many patients currently missing out on pneumococcal vaccine

Madrid, Spain, 15 June 2017: The results of a study presented today at the Annual European Congress of Rheumatology (EULAR) 2017 press conference showed that implementing a vaccination programme run by nursing staff dramatically improves pneumococcal vaccination coverage among vulnerable patients with chronic inflammatory rheumatic diseases.¹

Patients with chronic inflammatory rheumatic diseases receiving immunosuppressive therapy are known to be at high risk of invasive pneumococcal disease.^{2,3} However, despite EULAR and national recommendations regarding pneumococcal vaccination, ^{2,4,5} rates of vaccination remain low in this population.^{6,7}

“Patients with chronic inflammatory rheumatic diseases and receiving immunosuppressive therapies are at increased risk of dying from infections compared with the general population. Pneumococci are one of the causative pathogens,” said lead author Dr. Tiphaine Goulenok, from the Bichat Hospital, Paris, France. “Our study has shown that nurses can play an important role in improving the uptake of pneumococcal vaccination in these vulnerable patients.”

Over a four-month period, 126 consecutive adult patients with a chronic inflammatory rheumatic disease admitted to the day hospital unit at Bichat Hospital in Paris were screened, and their eligibility for pneumococcal vaccination assessed according to French national recommendations. A total of 76 (60% of this population) were candidates for pneumococcal vaccination because they were receiving prednisone, immunosuppressive drugs and / or biotherapy.



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Before the introduction of the nurse-led pneumococcal vaccination programme, only 13 of these 76 patients (17%) had received the vaccination. Among the remaining 63 patients who were candidates for vaccination, but not vaccinated, 56 (89%) were accurately identified by nursing staff as requiring vaccination. Having been informed about the benefits and risk of vaccination, 46 subsequently agreed to be vaccinated by the nurse.

Comparing the rate of vaccination before and then after the introduction of this intervention programme confirmed a significant improvement in vaccination coverage ($p < 0.001$).

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-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS:

For further information on this study, or to request an interview with the study lead, please do not hesitate to contact the EULAR congress Press Office in the Goya Room at the IFEMA, Madrid during EULAR 2017 or on:

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About Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases

Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) are a diverse group of diseases that commonly affect the joints, but can also affect the muscles, other tissues and internal organs. There are more than 200 different RMDs, affecting both children and adults. They are usually caused by problems of the immune system, inflammation, infections or gradual deterioration of joints, muscle and bones. Many of these diseases are long term and worsen over time. They are typically painful and limit function. In severe cases, RMDs can result in significant disability, having a major impact on both quality of life and life expectancy.

About 'Don't Delay, Connect Today!'

'Don't Delay, Connect Today!' is a EULAR initiative that unites the voices of its three pillars, patient (PARE) organisations, scientific member societies and health professional associations - as well as its



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international network - with the goal of highlighting the importance of early diagnosis and access to treatment. In Europe alone, over 120 million people are currently living with a rheumatic disease (RMD), with many cases undetected. The 'Don't Delay, Connect Today' campaign aims to highlight that early diagnosis of RMDs and access to treatment can prevent further damage, and also reduce the burden on individual life and society as a whole.

About EULAR

The European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) is an umbrella organisation which represents scientific societies, health professional associations and organisations for people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases throughout Europe. EULAR aims to reduce the burden of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases on individuals and society and to improve the treatment, prevention and rehabilitation of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases. To this end, EULAR fosters excellence in education and research in the field of rheumatology. It promotes the translation of research advances into daily care and fights for the recognition of the needs of people with musculoskeletal diseases by the governing bodies in Europe through advocacy action.

To find out more about the activities of EULAR, visit: www.eular.org

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