

## **'Don't Delay, Connect Today!' for EULAR's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Early diagnosis of Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases campaign launched at EULAR Congress**

**Kilchberg, Switzerland – 14th June, 2017:** To commemorate its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, the European League of Rheumatism (EULAR) will today announce the global launch of the 'Don't Delay, Connect Today!' campaign at the EULAR Congress in Madrid.

'Don't Delay, Connect Today!' is a EULAR campaign that, for the first time, engages all three EULAR pillars – patient organisations (PARE), health professional associations and scientific communities. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the importance of early diagnosis in preventing further damage for people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) and encourage timely access to evidence-based treatment. RMDs often receive delayed or no diagnosis.

This call to action is supported by research, including in those with rheumatoid arthritis where the initiation of treatment 12 weeks after the onset of symptoms, can minimise the level of joint impact over time and increase the chance of remission.<sup>1</sup>

In the European Union alone, an extra one million employees could be at work each day if early interventions were more widely accessible for people with RMDs.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, awareness of the importance of early diagnosis is limited amongst the general public, people with RMDs and many doctors/health professionals (HPRs). For example, fibromyalgia remains undiagnosed in as many as 3 out of 4 people with the condition, and diagnosis time averages 5 years.<sup>3</sup>

EULAR hopes to encourage people to connect with their doctor when possible RMD symptoms appear, such as persistent joint and muscle pain, extreme fatigue and stiffness. 'Don't Delay, Connect Today!' also aims to help doctors and HPRs identify and treat diseases as early and accurately as possible.

Commenting on the campaign launch, EULAR President, Professor Gerd R. Burmester, noted: *"By uniting everyone connected to the RMD community through 'Don't Delay, Connect Today!', we can work together to create significant positive change for people with RMDs. We encourage all three EULAR pillars and the general public to get involved in this campaign using the various educational materials, social media and digital initiatives and live events hosted by our networks. We want to ensure EULAR continues to place early diagnosis, access to treatment and the needs of RMD patients at the heart of everything we do."*

Following the global launch of 'Don't Delay, Connect Today!' at the EULAR Congress, EULAR will support local launches of campaign activity across Europe, led by its PARE patient organisation network.

To learn more about the campaign and find out how to get involved with a local PARE patient organisation, visit the World Arthritis Day website ([www.worldarthritisday.org](http://www.worldarthritisday.org)) or search #ConnectToday.

### **About EULAR**

The European League against Rheumatism (EULAR) is the European umbrella organisation representing scientific societies, health professional associations and organisations for people with RMDs. EULAR aims to reduce the burden of RMDs on individuals and society and to improve the treatment, prevention and rehabilitation of RMDs. 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 RMDs by the EU institutions through advocacy action.

### About RMDs

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.

### Press contact for further information/to arrange interviews with a EULAR representative

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<sup>1</sup> Van der Linden M.P.M., le Cessie S., Raza K., et al. Long-Term Impact of Delay in Assessment of Patients with Early Arthritis. *Arthritis & Rheumatism* 62 (2010) 3537-3546

<sup>2</sup> Working with arthritis. Arthritis Research UK. Available at: <http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/policy-and-public-affairs/reports-and-resources/reports/work-report.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Arnold, L.M., Clauw, D.J. et al., Improving the Recognition and Diagnosis of Fibromyalgia. (2011) 86(5): 457-464