

EULAR Physical Activity and Exercise therapy Study Group

The EULAR Physical Therapists were joined together by annual meetings related to the EULAR conference; in addition to being connected through a PT linked-in network we clearly see the need for forming a new subject-study group on Physical Activity to emphasize the inclusion of specialties from different professions and work systematically on assessments, recommendations and implementation of physical activity for people with Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases.

The medical environment is increasingly adapting to the possibilities of optimizing care by individualizing medical treatment, and tailoring it to phenotypes of disease. There are indications that individualizing physical activity, as an important treatment modality for rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases, can help control the disease, maximize benefits and minimize barriers for function and decrease the risk of co-morbidity.

Individualizing Physical Activity implies testing each patient physically, and based upon their results, adjusted to current knowledge about the different Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases (RMD) functioning, co-morbidity, accessibility and current knowledge about intensity and progression.

Physical Activity is generally recommended as part of managing the RMDs (1), and generally the American College of Sports Medicine recommendations to aid the prescription of Physical Activity applies to people with RMDs (2). At the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) conference in Rome 2015, we put together international expertise to discuss updates on beneficial effects of exercise for the different RMDs, to discuss -intensity levels of exercise in RMDs, and -how to measure them, -barriers and facilitators for applying optimal exercise intensity, and -adverse effects of exercise (3).

Individualized exercise improves symptoms in non-systemic inflammatory RMDs like OA (4), and improves cardiovascular health and disease activity in inflammatory diseases like rheumatoid arthritis (5, 6), spondylarthropathies (7) and myositis (8). Several simple clinical tests can help clinicians and researchers determine the level of strength, balance and aerobic capacity of each individual to optimally tailor physical activity and exercise to each person with RMDs.

The EULAR Physical Activity and Exercise therapy Study Group wants to put high quality Physical Activity and Exercise Therapy on the agenda, initiate research and apply for funding for projects important to optimizing Physical Activity and exercise for people with RMDs in the future and contribute to timely interventions, high quality discussions, and Physical Activity and exercise therapy engagement within EULAR.

As a special interest group, we annually approach EULAR for meeting facilities, etc., during the EULAR annual conference. Being defined as a special interest group within the EULAR system will facilitate international networking and communication between the Physical Activity study group, other groups and EULAR. The group is open to all specialties within the EULAR umbrella and beyond, including patients with special interests in physical activity and lifestyle related issues. The group can be accessed by registration at Linked-In, and/ or by attendance at the Study Group meeting at the EULAR congress, announced by the EULAR HPR Newsletter. To ensure a focused and efficient approach we estimate the active working period for this study group from 2016-2021.

Sincerely,

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