

Press Release

Brussels, 14 December 2012

## **New Global Burden of Disease Study: Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Conditions second greatest cause of disability worldwide**

According to a new global study on the burden of diseases supported by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and published in *The Lancet* yesterday, rheumatic and musculoskeletal conditions are the second greatest cause of disability in the world. In the first comprehensive study of the global impact of all diseases and risk factors, musculoskeletal conditions such as arthritis and back pain affect over 1.7 billion people worldwide, and have the fourth greatest impact on the overall health of the world population, considering both death and disability. This burden has increased by 45% over the last 20 years and will continue to do so unless action is taken. The European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) welcomes the publication of this landmark study. EULAR is asking policy makers to recognise the indisputable evidence that rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases are an enormous and emerging problem in all parts of the world and need to be given increased attention and resources.

The Global Burden of Disease 2010 Project is led by Professor Christopher Murray, Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, Seattle, the World Health Organisation and involves researchers from around the world. Leader of the Musculoskeletal Expert Group Lyn March, University of Sydney, Australia said: "This data provides the clearest evidence to date of the huge and increasing burden on global health from musculoskeletal conditions. It shows that lower back pain is the leading cause of disability and osteoarthritis is one of the fastest growing conditions. We need clear action to reverse this situation and to keep people moving and living without pain and disability."

Neil Betteridge, Vice President of EULAR representing People with Arthritis and Rheumatism in Europe (PARE) said "The finding that musculoskeletal conditions are the second greatest cause of disability globally should drive policy changes for the millions of people living with these painful and disabling problems. Despite the huge personal, social and economic impact of rheumatic and musculoskeletal conditions, policymakers have not prioritised them but this is now set to change."

EULAR points out that one of the next opportunities not to be missed in Europe is the EU's new Horizon 2020 research funding scheme which is currently under discussion between EU member states and the European Parliament. EULAR is advocating stronger prioritisation of rheumatic and musculoskeletal conditions in Horizon 2020. EULAR has committed to developing a long term research roadmap to guide decision-making on allocation of research resources from public and private schemes.

More information about the new Global Burden of Disease Study can be found at <http://www.thelancet.com/themed/global-burden-of-disease>.

## **About EULAR**

The European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) is the European umbrella organisation which represents scientific societies, health professionals associations and organisations of people with arthritis/rheumatism throughout Europe. At the European level, EULAR is representing the interests of the entire rheumatic disease community and is the natural partner of European policy makers when policies and regulatory frameworks are developed. With 44 scientific member societies, 35 patient organisations coming together under the roof of the Standing Committee of PARE (People with Arthritis/Rheumatism in Europe), several health professionals associations, and corporate members, EULAR underscores the importance of combating rheumatic diseases not only by medical means, but also through a wider context of care for rheumatic patients and a thorough understanding of their social and other needs. For more information please visit the EULAR website ([www.eular.org](http://www.eular.org)).

## **About RMDs**

Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases comprise all painful conditions of the locomotor system. More than 200 different diseases have been identified spanning from various types of degenerative joint and soft tissue disorders to osteoporosis, from arthritis to systemic connective tissue diseases. RMDs mostly affect the joints, tendons, ligaments, bones, and muscles. Common symptoms are pain, swelling, and stiffness often in conjunction with joint or bone destruction, disability and loss of working capacity. Some rheumatic diseases also involve inner organs and may lead to rapid organ failure and death.

People from all age groups and both genders can develop a rheumatic disorder. Rheumatic diseases affect the largest number of individuals in the industrialised world with up to one third of people of all ages being affected at some point during their lifetime. The consequences for the people concerned include impaired quality of life, reduction of physical function, disability and often premature mortality. Rheumatic diseases elicit the highest costs to European health care and socioeconomic systems by virtue of direct expenses for medicines, surgery, physiotherapy and hospitalisation. In addition, social care and production losses, sick leave, disability pensions, rehabilitative measures and expenses for caretaking result in enormous indirect costs.

## **Contact**

EULAR EU Office, Avenue des Arts 39, 1040 Brussels, Tel. +32 2 513 77 02, Fax +32 2 502 77 03, [brussels@eular.eu](mailto:brussels@eular.eu)

More information on RMDs can also be found at the website of the World Arthritis Day: <http://www.worldarthritisday.org/>