



1 RMDs AND WORKPLACE EXCLUSION: the human, economic and societal cost

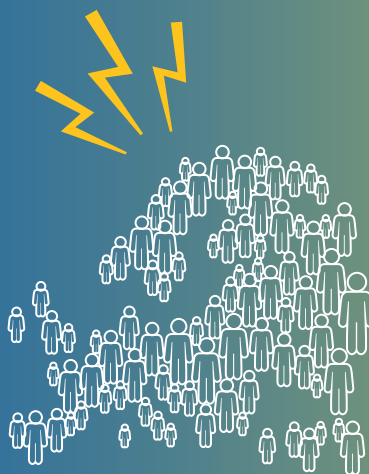


Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) are diseases that commonly affect the joints, but can affect any organ of the body.

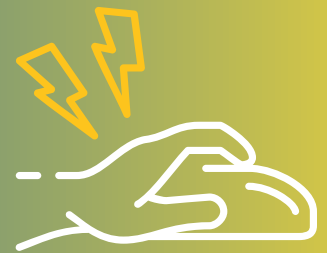
200

More than 200 RMDs affect both children and adults.

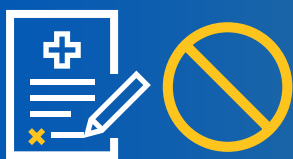
Many millions of people in Europe have RMDs, many of working age. ^{1,2}



60%



RMDs account for around 60% of all workplace health problems. ³



Biggest cause of sick leave and premature retirement due to physical disability in Europe. ⁴

One in three employees with long-term conditions have not discussed their RMD with their employer. ⁷



RMD patients find it harder to access and stay in work.



Human cost: negatively affects finances, self-esteem, and mental health.



70%

Up to 70% of RMD patients become work disabled within 5-10 years of symptom onset. ⁶

2 RMDs IN THE WORKPLACE: risks and opportunities

GENERAL WORKPLACE CHALLENGES



Many people with RMDs **hide their condition from employers and colleagues.**



Too many employers **don't understand the needs** of people with RMDs or provide enough support.



Many people with RMDs **feel inadequately supported** to stay in or return to work.

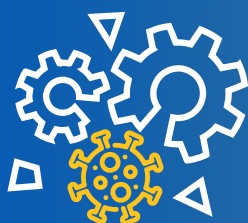
NEW WORKPLACE CHALLENGES IN COVID RECESSION



Some of the diseases and conditions that **signify high vulnerability to COVID-19** are common comorbidities for RMD sufferers.



People with inflammatory RMDs who take high doses of steroids and immunosuppressants may be at higher risk from COVID-19.



COVID-19 pandemic and recession likely to **exacerbate workplace challenges.**



Uncertain if they should continue working if they are employed in healthcare or other professions with direct human contact.



Access to some medicines and medical treatments has been reduced due to the COVID-19 response.



Concern about job security can **increase the impact of RMDs**
– less likely to take time off work for treatment
– more insecurity and anxiety.

AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE

- ✓ **Create an open, positive and supportive culture** between patients, colleagues and employers.
- ✓ **Promote flexible work schedules and tele-working** - COVID-19 has shown what is possible.
- ✓ **Create ergonomic workplaces** to increase comfort and reduce risks of accidents and flares.
- ✓ **Ensure** affordable and accessible **medicines and health technologies.**
- ✓ **Support research** into the prevention and treatment of RMDs.
- ✓ **Provide strong workplace protection** for people living with RMDs.
- ✓ **Ensure EU's disability strategy** reflects the employment needs of people with RMDs and is adequately funded.
- ✓ **Develop comprehensive national and regional strategies** to deliver more effective health promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation for RMDs.

3

RMDs IN THE WORKPLACE: sources

INFOGRAPHIC SOURCES

- ¹ / Van der Heijde D, Daikh DI, Betteridge N, et al, "Common language description of the term rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) for use in communication with the lay public, healthcare providers and other stakeholders endorsed by the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) and the American College of Rheumatology (ACR)," 2017.
- ² / DRFZ, "Rheumatic Diseases: Rheumatism-a disease with many faces," 2020.
- ³ / Arnold, L.M., Clauw, D.J. et al., "Improving the Recognition and Diagnosis of Fibromyalgia," 2011.
- ⁴ / Altman, RD, "Early management of osteoarthritis." The American Journal of Managed Care, 2010.
- ⁵ / Woolf, Anthony. "Working with rheumatic and musculoskeletal disease (RMDs)." OSHwiki, 2020.
- ⁶ / Stevens MJ, Walker-Bone K, Culliford DJ, et al. "Work participation, mobility and foot symptoms in people with systemic lupus erythematosus: findings of a UK national survey," 2019.
- ⁷ / Versus Arthritis, "The State of Musculoskeletal Health 2019."
- ⁸ / Pope JE, "What Does the COVID-19 Pandemic Mean for Rheumatology Patients?" 2020.