



EULAR Campaign Don't Delay, Connect Today – Time2Work: World Arthritis Day highlights the importance of employer support for people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases

With early diagnosis and proper treatment, people living with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) worldwide can contribute fully as members of the workforce through long careers.

10th October, 2019, Kilchberg, Switzerland — For this year's World Arthritis Day, the European League Against Rheumatism, EULAR, is emphasising the importance of supportive employer and company policies to enable the professional success of hundreds of millions of people with RMDs worldwide.

RMDs affect people of all ages and include more than 200 conditions, including rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. They are among the main causes of physical disability and keep an estimated one million Europeans out of work every day, and millions more globally, representing substantial productivity costs for companies and society.

For this year's World Arthritis Day, scheduled for 12 October, EULAR's Don't Delay, Connect Today campaign with the theme Time2Work aims to dispel misconceptions about RMDs and shows how employers can best support people who live and work with the conditions.

While some RMDs are long term and worsen over time, many can be effectively managed through early intervention, minimising symptoms and an improved working environment for those with the conditions. Delays in treatment, however, can result in significant disability, including irreversible damage to joints, tissues and organs, as well as decreased life expectancy.

"Employers can support the well-being of people with RMDs; work is a critical part of building self-esteem and it's a tragedy that so much talent is lost from the workforce," said Professor Iain McInnes, President of EULAR and Chair of the International League Against Rheumatism (ILAR).

In many of the 73 countries of the Asia-Pacific region, where 70% of the world's population lives, the number of rheumatology specialists is not sufficient to meet needs. "We are working to expand access of people with RMDs to evidence-based treatment," said Professor Syed Atiqul Haq, President of the Asia Pacific League of Associations for Rheumatology, APLAR. "The best strategy for all people with RMDs is to obtain care from a specialist as soon as possible."

"Our primary message on World Arthritis Day is one of hope," said Dr. Enrique R. Soriano, President of the Pan American League of Associations for Rheumatology, PANLAR. "Contrary to what people often think, RMDs can be very effectively managed. Rheumatology specialists can draw upon many effective therapies and treatment strategies, while new therapies are under development."

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 international network – with the goal of highlighting the importance of early diagnosis and access to treatment. In the European Union 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 reduce the burden on individuals and society. The theme for 2019/2020 is Time2Work.

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.

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

Contact

Ursula Aring, EULAR Communications Manager, ursula.aring@eular.org, Tel. +41 44 780 30 38.