Study Group for risk factors for rheumatoid arthritis, under the auspices of the EULAR Standing Committee of Investigative Research (ESCIR)

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The preclinical and earliest clinically apparent phases of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) are likely to represent important therapeutic windows within which clinical outcomes can be dramatically modulated. The Study Group for risk factors for RA aims to build an international network of excellence to facilitate collaborations and exchange knowledge about these phases of RA within Europe.

The Study Group will provide a platform through which investigators can:

- Study mechanisms involved in specific stages of the disease progression.
- Identify and assess biomarkers, including molecular, cellular and imaging biomarkers, relevant to disease progression.
- Develop natural history studies that operate across currently available cohorts.
- Develop mechanisms to establish new cohorts to address specific aims as defined by the SGPCRA.
- Develop and assess novel intervention strategies and therapeutic agents within these phases of disease.

To achieve this goal, the Study Group will bring together expertise from all leading research institutes in relevant fields within Europe.

Founding members of the group were:

The Study Group will be open for all institutes and the membership will expand over time. Meetings will be connected to the EWRR and EULAR.

The specific aims of the Study Group are to:

- Define terminologies relevant to early phases of RA and to facilitate the development of shared standard operating procedures to allow groups working in these areas to interact in a cooperative manner.
- Facilitate research to address:
  1. Mechanisms driving the immunological abnormalities seen during the preclinical phase of RA and the stimuli which turn such abnormalities into a joint-centric disease.
  2. Processes in non-articular tissues (e.g. bone marrow and lymph node) and systems (e.g. neuroendocrine) which may be relevant to disease development and progression.
  3. Mechanisms operating within the joint during the transition from systemic immune disturbance to joint pathology.
• Facilitate the development of intervention protocols based upon an understanding of disease mechanisms operating during relevant phases of disease.
• Work with other ESCIR study groups including the animal model study group and the synovitis study group to develop innovative strategies to address clinically relevant question in preclinical and early RA.
• Activate new academic collaborations within Europe. In particular the group will look to ways to facilitate collaboration in natural history and therapeutic studies within an environment with varied regulatory requirements across participating countries.
• Activate the involvement of relevant Patient / User groups in the area of the earliest phases of RA.
• Work with print and other media to raise awareness of the earliest phases of RA, and of RA risk and the importance and benefit of early intervention amongst the general population and relevant political groupings.

Study group publications: