

**Annual European Congress of Rheumatology  
(EULAR 2019)**

Madrid, Spain, 12-15 June 2019

**GOUT PATIENTS SUFFER IN SILENCE WITH LOW EXPECTATIONS OF TREATMENT**

European survey suggests patients are satisfied with their treatment despite inadequate disease management<sup>1</sup>

**Madrid, Spain, 12 June 2019:** The results of a 14 country pan-European survey presented today at the Annual European Congress of Rheumatology (EULAR 2019) suggest gout is being diagnosed late, is not well controlled, and is not regularly monitored.<sup>1</sup>

Gout is a very common condition. It is caused by deposits of crystals of a substance called uric acid (also known as urate) in the joints, which leads to inflammation. Periods of time when gout symptoms appear are called flares. Flares can be unpredictable and debilitating, developing over a few hours and causing severe pain in the joints.

The survey included 1,100 patients with gout and found a quarter were not diagnosed until they had four or more flares. Furthermore, over 70% had flares in the last year (a third of these had more than three). Less than half are monitored for serum uric acid two or more times a year and 59% do not have regular follow up appointments. Despite this, eight out of 10 patients claim they are satisfied with their current treatment and do not expect better management of their disease.<sup>1</sup>

“Our results demonstrate that, across Europe, gout has a significant impact on the lives of patients and their families. Although it is easily treatable, there are significant gaps in the current management of gout,” said Marc de Meulemeester, general practitioner with a special interest in gout, Belgium. “This should be a call to action to educate patients and their doctors about adequate management of gout.”

Results suggest that mainly general practitioners versus rheumatologists are involved in the diagnosis of the disease (73% vs. 8%), discussion of gout (68% vs. 15%), and treatment of the last gout flare (59% vs. 11%). Over three quarters of the patients suffered from co-morbidities such as high blood pressure (52%), high cholesterol (41%), and type II diabetes (23%). Regarding treatment, 58% receive uric acid lowering therapies, 43% painkillers, 25% colchicine, 13% non-medical pain relief and 12% corticosteroids.<sup>1</sup>

“Gout is a disabling condition with increasing incidence across Europe,” said Professor John D. Isaacs, Chairperson of the Abstract Selection Committee, EULAR. “It is very disappointing to see that, despite effective treatments, gout is being sub-optimally managed, and patients are suffering as a result. The findings of this survey support the high unmet need of gout patients as described in the EULAR RheumaMap. Strategies need to be developed to improve the care of people with gout.”

The project was initiated in 2018 and is supported by 12 international and national patient organisations in Europe. The 15-minute online survey was developed with patient and clinical experts and was conducted in 2018. There were 1,100 responses from patients with gout (mean 2.9 flares in past 12 months) from Austria, Belgium, France, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.<sup>1</sup>

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**-ENDS-**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

**For further information on this study, or to request an interview with the study lead, please do not hesitate to contact the EULAR Press Office:**

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## **About Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases**

Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) are a diverse group of diseases that commonly affect the joints, but can affect any organ of the body. 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.<sup>2</sup>

## **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.<sup>3</sup> The 'Don't Delay, Connect Today!' campaign aims to highlight that early diagnosis of RMDs and access to treatment can prevent further damage, and also reduce the burden on individual life and society as a whole.

## **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](http://www.eular.org)

## References

- <sup>1</sup> DeMeulemeester M, Jansen T, Petersen G, *et al.* European patient voice in gout survey – subjective satisfaction in gout patients versus objective suboptimal gout care. EULAR 2019; Madrid: Abstract OP0157-HPR.
- <sup>2</sup> 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). *Ann Rheum Dis.* 2018 Jun;77(6):829-832.
- <sup>3</sup> EULAR. 10 things you should know about rheumatic diseases fact sheet. Available at: <https://www.eular.org/myUploadData/files/10%20things%20on%20RD.pdf> [Last accessed May 2019].