

**Annual European Congress of Rheumatology  
(EULAR 2018)**

Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 13-16 June 2018

**OBESITY IN WOMEN AND CURRENT SMOKING IN MEN PREDICT LACK OF  
REMISSION IN EARLY RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS**

Study shows 46% of women and 38% of men with early rheumatoid arthritis do not achieve remission within a year

**Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 15 June 2018:** The results of a study presented today at the Annual European Congress of Rheumatology (EULAR 2018) report that obesity in women and current smoking in men were the strongest predictors of not achieving remission in early rheumatoid arthritis (RA) within a year.<sup>1</sup>

Although early identification and aggressive treatment of RA improves outcomes, this study showed that 46% of women and 38% of men did not achieve remission in the first year despite receiving guideline-based care. Multivariable analysis highlighted that obesity more than doubled the likelihood of not achieving remission in women. Other predictors were minority status, lower education, higher tender joint counts and fatigue scores at baseline. In men, current smoking was associated with 3.5 greater odds of not achieving remission within the first year. Other predictors included older age and higher pain.<sup>1</sup>

“These results highlight the need to support physicians and empower patients to take advantage of the impact lifestyle changes can have on disease progression,” said Professor Johannes W. Bijlsma, EULAR President. “We consider it essential that recommendations reach all audiences – from rheumatologists, patients and patient organisations to healthcare professionals – in order to support all in understanding how to best manage the disease.”

Almost all patients within the study were initially treated with conventional synthetic disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (csDMARDs), with three quarters being treated with methotrexate. Analysis demonstrated that not using methotrexate significantly increased the likelihood of not achieving remission in women by 28% and men by 45%.<sup>1</sup>

“Our results suggest that lifestyle changes – smoking cessation in men and weight reduction in women – as well as optimising methotrexate use may facilitate rapid reduction of inflammation, an essential goal of treatment in early rheumatoid arthritis,” said Susan J. Bartlett, Professor of Medicine at McGill University (study author).

The study included 1,628 adults with early RA enrolled in the Canadian Early Arthritis Cohort (2007-16) and receiving guideline-based care. Baseline sociodemographic and RA characteristics and patient reported outcomes over 12 months were used to identify predictors

of failing to achieve remission (defined as DAS28\* > 2.6). Participants were mostly female (72%) with an average age of 55. They had an average of two comorbidities, and symptom duration of six months.<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract number: OP0106**

**-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:**

**Email:** [eularpressoffice@ruderfinn.co.uk](mailto:eularpressoffice@ruderfinn.co.uk)

**Telephone:** +44 (0) 20 7438 3084

**Twitter:** @EULAR\_Press

**YouTube:** Eular Press Office

## **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

---

\* DAS28: disease activity score with 28 joints examined in this assessment.

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> Bartlett SJ, Schieir O, Valois MF, *et al.* Who is not reaching remission in early RA and why? Predictors for persistent disease activity in the first year differ in men and women and are related to lifestyle and treatment. EULAR 2018; Amsterdam: Abstract OP0106.

<sup>2</sup> van der Heijde D, *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). *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*. 2018;doi:10.1136/annrheumdis-2017-212565. [Epub ahead of print].

<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 April 2018].