



Cyprus League Against Rheumatism
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**18TH AWARENESS WEEK FOR RHEUMATIC AND MUSCULOSCELETAL DISEASES (RMDs)
AND NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EULAR CAMPAIGN “DON’T DELAY, CONNECT
TODAY” (DDCT)**

2nd May, 2018

The Annual Awareness Week (AAW) for Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases (RMDs) will be organised by the Cyprus League Against Rheumatism (CYPLAR), with the support of the Rheumatology Society of Cyprus and the Cyprus Health Professionals in Rheumatology cosmosrheuma+, lasting from the 5th until the 13th May, 2018. The AAW is organised for the 18th consecutive year and events are scheduled all over Cyprus. The main aim of this AAW is to raise public awareness around RMDs, while highlighting the importance of early diagnosis and early access to treatment. As a part of the AAW, the EULAR Campaign DDCT will also be nationally implemented this year, with the kind permission and support of the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR). The main campaign events will peak during the AAW, targeting multiple audiences simultaneously.

A roundtable workshop was organised in March to review the national strategy for RMDs. Through the workshop, a proposal was developed with measures and strategies to promote early diagnosis and timely access to evidence-based treatment. Present were the Director of Ministry of Health, the presidents of CYPLAR and Cyprus Rheumatology Society, the National Committee for RMDs, various stakeholders and representatives from various Health Professionals associations. The proposal will be introduced and discussed, requesting implementation of the agreed measures, on 10th May, when a health committee will be held in Parliament. Representatives from the Ministry of Health will be present. Representatives of CYPLAR will have an additional meeting with the Minister of Health for further discussions. Both the AAW and the campaign will be under the auspices of the Minister of Health.

The AAW is officially launched on May 5th, at 17:00 CYP at the Olympic Mansion in Nicosia, with a talk co-organised by CYPLAR and the Cyprus Crohn's and Colitis Association (CYCCA): “Ankylosing spondylitis and Crohn's disease - can they coexist? Doctors analyse and patients present their experiences”. Earlier on the same day, an organised cyclists group will dedicate their morning ride to the AAW and the national DDCT campaign, wearing a dedicated t-shirt with the campaign logo. They will then promote photographs and videos on their social media channels for further awareness, mainly targeting physically active audiences and young people.

On May 6th, at 10:00 CYP, a swimming event entitled "Swimming for my fellow human", aiming to raise awareness around RMDs, will take place at the Limassol Olympic Swimming pool.

The following day a press conference will be held at the Ministry of Health, at 10:00 CYP, informing the press and the public about the AAW and DDCT national implementation. The press conference will provide the opportunity to invite people to the events, pass the campaign message and create awareness and stress the importance of early diagnosis and access to treatment.

Dr. Christos Antoniadis, Rheumatologist and Director of the Rheumatology Clinic in Paphos will talk about "osteoarthritis and treatment". The event will be hosted at the Nicosia office of CYPLAR on May 8th, at 17:30 CYP. On the 10th of May at 17:00 CYP, the nephrologist Dr. Elena Frangou will give a talk at the Nicosia office of CYPLAR, on how Lupus can affect the kidneys, providing essential information for prevention, protection and treatment. On the weekend of 12th to 13th May the main events of the DDCT campaign will peak, giving the sense of multiple connections being made to promote awareness of RMDs and their early diagnosis and treatment.

The Minister of Health will signal the campaign launch on Saturday, May 12th at 10:00 CYP, at the General Hospital of Nicosia. The press will cover the event and members of political parties will be interviewed about RMDs and the importance of early diagnosis. From there, a mobile clinic (Rheuma Truck), following a motorcycle club and other campaign-assigned vehicles will travel to and Ermou Square in Larnaca at 12:30 CYP and stay there from 13:00 till 16:00 CYP. On the next day, the motorcade/campaign-procession will also travel to Gr. Afxentiou Avenue in Limassol and stay there; the public will be informed by volunteers, health professionals, patients and rheumatologists from 10:00 to 12:30 CYP. At both stops volunteers, health professionals, patients and rheumatologists will be informing the public for RMDs and their symptoms and urge people to visit a rheumatologist when those symptoms continue. At each stop, dancers will dance, handing out campaign informative material/leaflets and at the end of their dance they will strike poses which will depict RMDs symptoms. This will be the last stop of the Rheuma Truck. Finally, a motorcycle club will travel from Larnaca to Ayia Napa at 15:30 CYP. With their arrival to Arch. Makarios III in Ayia Napa, at 17:00 CYP the closing ceremony of the campaign will start. The mayor and the president of CYPLAR will give speeches about the campaign and its goals, will account and evaluate the campaign results and a final dance from a local dance school will take place. Overall, the closing ceremony is designed to raise public awareness.

By involving patients, the public, Health Professional Associations and the Scientific Society in Cyprus, both the AAW and the EULAR Campaign will attempt to achieve greater awareness across all levels of society, simultaneously. Increased awareness may then put additional focus on the subject of RMDs at policy-making level to implement the proposed measures and strategies, towards timely and effective treatment of RMDs.

In the following weeks, the campaign will be evaluated through online questionnaires addressed to the public. However, CYPLAR expects the campaign to be highly successful in creating awareness considering all these different people participating and involved, as well as all the influencers helping and all the different audiences.

CYPLAR was founded in 1984 by patients with RMDs and aims to improve the provision of health care to people with RMDs in Cyprus, improve their quality of life and inform the public about the extent and severity of RMDs.

The RMDs AAW has been organised by CYPLAR every May, since 2001. Talks, seminars, workshops and media appearances are organised every year to target patients, health professionals, politicians and the public. Through these events, the AAW always aims to a) increase awareness around RMDs and their occurrence rate; b) encourage early referrals to rheumatologists to prevent further damage; c) inform existing patients on new treatment options and advances made in medicine.

'Don't Delay, Connect Today' is a EULAR initiative. EULAR is the European umbrella organisation representing scientific societies, health professional associations and organisations for people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs). EULAR aims to reduce the burden of RMDs on individuals and society and to improve the treatment, prevention and rehabilitation of RMDs. All events can be found on the social media channels of CYPLAR on Twitter @Cyplar1 and Facebook @cyplar; follow #ConnectToday across social media!

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