

EULAR  
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## EULAR INCREASES ITS SUPPORT TO IMPROVE RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCESSES

The European Alliance of Associations for Rheumatology (EULAR) has launched a new funding opportunity to support European investigators interested in developing and evaluating innovative RMD research methods and tools. These are critically needed to find new solutions to the persistent unmet needs of people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases.

**Kilchberg/Switzerland: Chronic and often painful rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) are a severe problem for millions of people in the EU and worldwide, often strongly impacting their wellbeing, socio-economic activity, and quality of life [1]. Despite the tremendous progress made over the past few years, many questions about timely diagnosis, better treatment, and disease management of RMDs, remain unanswered. New research methods and tools are required to better understand more than 200 of these conditions. Because research support varies across Europe, the European Alliance of Associations for Rheumatology (EULAR) provides a new funding opportunity for European investigators interested in developing innovative research methods to address the unmet needs of people with RMDs.**

In the second half of the twentieth century, astonishing progress has led to a better understanding and treatment of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs). This progress was driven by extensive research efforts to decipher the complex mechanisms behind each disease. New drugs have changed the course of some RMDs and improved the clinical outcomes for patients. Yet, many unmet needs remain unaddressed among people with RMDs, partly because of a lack of innovative research methods, tools, and processes.

“That’s why EULAR launched its new *Improving Research Methods, Capabilities, and Processes Grant*. It offers dedicated funding for improving the way we do RMD research to increase the quality, efficiency, or safety”, said Prof. Dirk Elewaut, the chair of the EULAR Research Committee. Successful proposals will receive support of up to EUR 50.000 over one year.

Eligible applications may focus on all types of research including basic, translational, clinical, as well as health outcomes research, community-engaged research, health services research, or implementation science. “We need to find new ways to develop reliable clinical and biological markers to be able to select the best treatment for each patient, but we need methods and tools to understand issues such as patients’ compliance and pharmacological side-effects during routine clinical management,” explained Elewaut. Currently, it is unclear which patients may benefit more from a given drug, which will not respond at all, and which are at a higher risk of intolerance.

Another area is methods to develop validated quality indicators for clinical RMD routines so that quality improvements in care can be measured better. “Currently it is a problem that most of the quality standards and indicators we use were primarily developed in well-developed health systems but should be used in all European countries,” said Elewaut. “Take the referral process from a primary physician for people with RMDs. The delay in referral and diagnosis is an essential care gap. These referral systems vary across Europe, and there are no indications of the feasible optimum of time.”

The low adoption of best practices in RMD care is another example. [2] “We need new methods for studying the best ways of implementing evidence-based guidelines in different care settings,”

added Elewaut. “EULAR hopes that this new funding opportunity will stimulate innovative ideas that take into account the diverse care settings across Europe.”

A listing of eligible example topics and research questions can be found on the [grant page](#). With the new funding opportunity, EULAR aims to encourage investigators across Europe to develop new solutions to a wide range of RMD issues.

### How to apply

The new *Improving Research Methods, Capabilities and Processes Grant* will be available to investigators who are current residents and working in EULAR-affiliated countries. More information on how to apply can be found [online](#). The upcoming submission deadline is December 15, 2022. Questions can be sent to the EULAR Research team at [research@eular.org](mailto:research@eular.org).

### References

1. 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;77:829–832.
2. Sharp CA, Swaites L, Ellis B, Dziedzic K, Walsh N. Implementation research: making better use of evidence to improve healthcare. *Rheumatology (Oxford)*. 2020 Aug 1;59(8):1799-1801. doi: 10.1093/rheumatology/keaa088. PMID: 32252071.

### About EULAR

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. 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.

### Contact

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