

EULAR  
03.06.2021  
Kilchberg,  
Switzerland

## TREATMENT WITH TUMOUR NECROSIS FACTOR INHIBITORS MAY SLOW DISEASE PROGRESSION IN PATIENTS WITH SPONDYLOARTHRITIS

**Analysis from the German GESPIC cohort presented at EULAR 2021**

**Sacroiliitis is an inflammation of the sacroiliac joints, situated where the lower spine and pelvis connect. Sacroiliitis is linked to the disease axial spondyloarthritis (axSpA) and visible on X-ray. Observational cohort studies have shown that there is low, but still detectable progression in radiographic sacroiliitis, which might also have an impact on the function in patients with axSpA. Recent data show that tumour necrosis factor inhibitors (TNFi) might slow spinal progression when started earlier and taken for longer. However, the question of whether they also have such an effect on radiographic progression in sacroiliac joints is still unclear.**

Murat Torgutalp and colleagues investigated the longitudinal association between radiographic sacroiliitis progression and treatment with TNFi in patients with early axSpA in a long-term inception cohort. The results were shared in an oral session at the 2021 EULAR congress.

Based on the availability of at least two sets of sacroiliac joint (SIJ radiographs), 166 patients with non-radiographic axial spondyloarthritis (nr-axSpA), and 135 with radiographic (r-axSpA), from the German Spondyloarthritis Inception Cohort (GESPIC) were included in the analysis. Two trained and calibrated central readers scored the radiographs, and if both scored an image as definite radiographic sacroiliitis, the patient was classified as having r-axSpA. The association between previous and current TNFi use, and change in the sacroiliitis sum score over 2 years was analysed.

At baseline, 9 (3.0%) patients were treated with a TNFi, and 87 (28.9%) patients received at least one TNFi during the entire follow-up period. While receiving 12 or more months of TNFi in the previous interval was associated with lower progression of the sacroiliitis sum score compared to not receiving TNFi in the previous interval, this was not the case in patients who received TNFi for longer than 12 months in the current 2-year interval. The significant association between TNFi use for longer than 12 months in the previous interval and progression in the sacroiliitis sum score were confirmed in the adjusted analysis. In addition, a similar trend for the beneficial effects was observed in different models, which included other treatment definitions with TNFi in the previous 2-year interval.

The authors concluded that TNFi treatment was associated with slowing radiographic sacroiliitis progression in people with axSpA. This effect became evident 2–4 years after treatment initiation.

### Source

Torgutalp M, et al. Progression in Patients with Early Axial Spondyloarthritis: 10-Year Results from the German Spondyloarthritis Inception Cohort. Presented at EULAR 2021; abstract OP0137.

### 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.

### **About the EULAR European Congress of Rheumatology**

Since its introduction in 2000, the annual EULAR European Congress of Rheumatology has become the primary platform for exchange of scientific and clinical information in Europe. It is also a renowned forum for interaction between medical doctors, scientists, people with arthritis/rheumatism, health professionals and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry worldwide. The EULAR congress is usually held in June in one of the major cities in Europe ([see previous congresses](#)).

The [scientific programme](#) at the congress covers a wide range of topics on clinical innovations, clinical, translational and basic science. Meetings set up by associations of people with arthritis/rheumatism, health professionals and the health care industry complement the programme. The poster sessions, offering lively interaction between presenters and participants, are regarded by many as the heart of the congress.

Over the years, the EULAR Congress has gained a reputation of being a most innovative platform for the practicing physician particularly with respect to the acquisition of information on novel clinical research. The congress attracts more than 18,000 delegates from more than 130 countries.

The aim of the EULAR European Congress of Rheumatology is to provide a forum of the highest standard for scientific, both clinical and basic, educational, and social exchange between professionals involved in rheumatology, liaising with patient organisations, in order to achieve progress in the clinical care of people with rheumatic diseases.

### **Contact**

EULAR Press, [press@eular.org](mailto:press@eular.org), Tel. +41 44 716 30 36

### **Notes to Editors**

[EULAR Advocacy](#)

[EULAR Congress](#)

[EULAR Education](#)

[EULAR Quality of Care](#)

[EULAR Research](#)

[EULAR Press Releases](#)

Follow EULAR on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#)