

The Edgar Stene Prize Jury 2017 – Meet the Judges

Every year, EULAR runs a competition inviting people living with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) in Europe to submit a themed essay. The competition allows people to express the experiences, emotions, challenges and successes they encounter during their life with an RMD through the written word.

The Edgar Stene Prize is awarded to the person judged to have submitted the best essay describing his or her individual experience of living with their condition. A selection of the best essays is published and used to raise awareness by bringing to life the impact of RMDs.

Each year, a panel of people with experience or knowledge of RMDs has the honour of judging the competition. We welcome five judges who represent the three pillars of EULAR, and who come from different countries across Europe.

Polina Pchelnikova is the leader of this year's Edgar Stene Prize jury. Polina, who is from Russia, explains why this year's theme is so relevant.



“I am delighted to lead the 2017 Edgar Stene Prize jury. I have an educational background in economics, Chinese language and mathematics, and my work experience is related to international trade and the art business. Since 2010 I have been an active member of the Russian patient organisation for people with RMDs and, currently, I am the head of its Moscow department.

I think that the Stene Prize is important because it helps to drive public attention to the crucial issues that people with RMDs face. It also allows people with RMDs to feel that they are not alone – that many other people around the world have to deal with similar problems.

The Stene Prize encourages people to reflect on their own lives and those of the people around them. That results in a more conscious attitude to RMDs, to the lives of people with RMDs and to one's own life.

This year's topic *'Time is joint – Joints over time: Early diagnosis and access to care in rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) – the ideal world and the reality – my personal story'* is very important.

In Russia, early diagnosis and access to care for people with RMDs both have certain issues. On average, it takes patients two years to get a diagnosis and epidemiological data suggests that the actual incidence and prevalence of rheumatoid arthritis in Russia is twice as high compared to official statistics. Not many rheumatologists are available – on average there is one rheumatologist per 100,000 people in the country, but, in some regions, there is only one rheumatologist per 450,000 people. As a result, fewer than 20% of patients receive a timely diagnosis and only about 30% of patients who need biologics can access that treatment.

Standing behind these figures, there are plenty of dramatic personal stories highlighting the impact on people's lives. Personally, I got lucky. I got a diagnosis within two months of having my first symptoms and I started biologic treatment a few months after getting diagnosed. This has resulted in having a very good quality of life after six years of having rheumatoid arthritis.

Hopefully, driving attention towards the importance of early diagnosis and access to treatment for people with RMDs – and to all the other issues that people with RMDs face – can help all people with RMDs in different countries to have a good quality of life.

Together, with my fellow jury colleagues, I very much look forward to reading this year's competition entries. We want to thank everyone who has participated and supported this great EULAR project and wish all the finalists the best of luck!"

Polina's fellow judges this year are:



Prof. Tadej Avcin

Slovenia, Chair of the EULAR Standing Committee on Paediatric Rheumatology

Tor Eivind Johansen

Norway, 2nd Vice Chairman of the Norwegian League Against Rheumatism



Wendy Olsder

Netherlands, Board Member of Yout-R-Well.com and representative of Young PARE

Dr. Yeliz Prior

UK, Member of the EULAR Health Professional Scientific Committee

