

Annual European Congress of Rheumatology (EULAR 2019)

Madrid, Spain, 12-15 June 2019

EULAR launches *Time2Work* campaign to highlight the importance of keeping people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases in work

In the European Union alone, an extra one million employees could be in work each day if early interventions were more widely accessible for people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs)¹

Madrid, Spain, 12 June 2019 – Today the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) launches the *Time2Work* campaign to raise awareness of the impact rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) have, not only on individuals, but wider society, productivity and our economies and what can be done to improve this situation.

Affecting one quarter of the EU population (120 million), RMDs are the biggest cause of sick leave and premature retirement due to physical disability.^{2,3} As one of the main causes of physical disability, RMDs contribute considerably to loss of productivity in the workplace.⁴

“Work is a critical part of building self-esteem and it’s a tragedy that so much talent is lost from the workforce,” said Professor Iain McInnes, EULAR President Elect. “Today we call for three things – greater access to early interventions to limit the pain, tiredness and immobility that make it difficult to keep working, greater awareness of the challenges people with rheumatic diseases face and a review of the way we work. Small adjustments like flexible hours, improved access, home working and standing desks could make all the difference.”

Time2Work is part of EULAR’s ongoing *Don’t Delay, Connect Today* campaign which is committed to raising awareness of the importance of early diagnosis of RMDs. Early diagnosis, early referral to a rheumatologist and early access to effective treatments are known to improve outcomes, quality of life and the ability to work, but diagnosis is often delayed or never received.^{5,6,7,8}

“Keeping people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases in work not only benefits individuals, but also the whole of society,” says Marios Kouloumas, EULAR Campaign Lead and President of the Cyprus League Against Rheumatism. “We need to ensure that people who develop RMDs are diagnosed early and have access to the latest, most effective treatments and the right support to help them remain in work. We also need to encourage employers to adopt inclusive practices and universal designs – workplaces that are good for people with disabilities are good for everyone.”

EULAR's *Time2Work* campaign calls for the RMD community to come together to help people with RMDs access and remain in work. The campaign encompasses all three pillars of EULAR: People with Arthritis and Rheumatism in Europe (PARE), Health Professionals in Rheumatology (HPR), and Scientific Societies across Europe.

“EULAR is committed to increasing the participation of people with RMDs in work by 2023 and the *Time2Work* campaign is an important part of helping us achieve this goal,” concludes Professor McInnes.

Please watch EULAR President, Professor Johannes W. J. Bijlsma, talk about the *Time2Work* campaign: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBSg7ytXVKc>.

Could you or someone you know be one of the 120 million EU citizens with an RMD? For more information on how the *Don't Delay, Connect Today* campaign is fighting to raise awareness and change lives of those with RMDs please watch these video: https://www.eular.org/eular_campaign.cfm.

NOTES TO EDITORS

To interview a EULAR representative, please email Josie Fisher, Ruder Finn, at jfisher@ruderfinn.co.uk.

About Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases

Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) are a diverse group of diseases that commonly affect the joints, but can also affect the muscles, other tissues and internal organs. There are more than 200 different RMDs, affecting both children and adults.⁹ 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.

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.² The *Don't Delay, Connect Today* campaign aims to highlight that early diagnosis of RMDs and access to treatment can prevent further damage, and reduce the burden on individuals and society. The theme for 2019/2020 is *Time2Work*.

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

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

References

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