

RMD Open

Rheumatic & Musculoskeletal Diseases

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¹Research Laboratory and Division of Clinical Rheumatology, Dept Internal Medicine, University of Genova, Genova, Italy

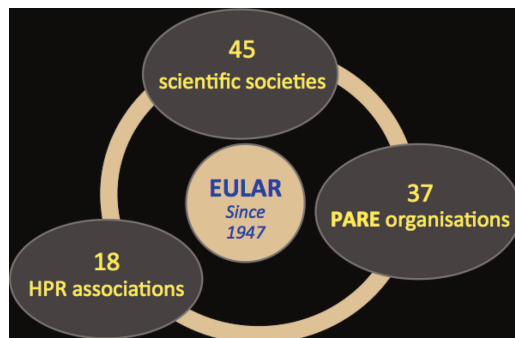
²Department of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology, Charité – University Medicine Berlin Free University and Humboldt, University Berlin, Germany

³Department of Rheumatology, Diak Hospital, Oslo, Norway

Correspondence to
Maurizio Cutolo;
mcutolo@unige.it

Introducing *RMD Open*

Maurizio Cutolo,¹ Gerd R Burmester,² Tore K Kvien³



Founded in 1947, the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) is a European umbrella organisation that represents 45 national scientific rheumatological societies, 37 organisations of people with arthritis/rheumatism and 18 health professionals associations throughout Europe.

In 2015, EULAR will have a total of 100 members.

The aims of EULAR are to reduce the burden of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMD) on individual and society levels and to improve its treatment, prevention and aid in rehabilitation. 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 recognition of the needs of people with rheumatic diseases.

At the European political level, EULAR represents the interests of the entire rheumatic disease community and is a natural partner of European policy makers by whom policies and regulatory frameworks are developed. Since 2013, RMDs have been recognised by the EU Commission as being among the major five chronic diseases, and substantial investments into research are being planned.

EULAR is a truly pan-European organisation fostering a multitude of activities including education and training in rheumatology. Every year, EULAR sponsors a number of educational grants and bursaries for scientific researchers, clinicians and health professionals, and people with arthritis/rheumatism, tailored to support experts in developing their skills and expertise, and broadening their

network of contacts at the European and international level.

Furthermore, EULAR offers an extensive programme of traditional and online educational workshops and courses for trainee and specialised rheumatologists. These include the EULAR Postgraduate Course, which seeks to harmonise and update the professional knowledge of European rheumatologists while giving participants the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas and experiences. The comprehensive On-line Course on Rheumatic Diseases together with specific courses on RMDs provide trainees from all over the world with the opportunity to acquire a strong base of expertise in RMDs and the latest insights into assessment and treatment. In 2014, a total of 1642 registrations were recorded.

Since its introduction in 2000, the Annual European Congress of Rheumatology has become the primary platform for exchange of scientific and clinical information in Europe as well as a renowned forum for interaction between practising or training physicians, scientists, people with arthritis/rheumatism, health professionals and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry worldwide. The number of abstracts have increased considerably during recent years, but in particular an increase in the number of scientific contributions has been observed, with 4041 submitted abstracts for the EULAR Congress in 2014.

RMDs impose an economic burden of over €200 billion per year in Europe alone, where at least 120 million people are affected. A further mission for EULAR is to support research projects looking at different aspects of rheumatology and funding collaborative research between European rheumatology groups. To this end, EULAR and the linked foundation for rheumatological research (FOREUM) provides substantial grants every year.

Therefore, the EULAR Standing Committees regularly publish recommendations for the diagnosis and treatment of various rheumatic disorders. These recommendations and set of criteria are developed by experts, including

patients, and are published in the EULAR journal, the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* (ARD, ard.bmj.com). First published in 1939, ARD has been the official scientific publication of EULAR since 2000, and is now the number one ranked (original research) journal in the field for the sixth consecutive year, with an impact factor of 9.270.

So why does EULAR need another journal, another communication platform? As RMDs become more recognised as an important global burden disease, as evidenced by the recent EU investment, more and more research is funded and carried out, with the aim of improving outcomes for patients with these chronic diseases. ARD has been receiving an increasing number of submitted papers over the last years from about 1600 in 2008 to about 2000 submissions in 2014. The acceptance rate has decreased and is now between 15% and 20%, which means that many important papers, as well as preliminary, negative or smaller scale studies, remain unavailable to the EULAR community in this journal. Moreover, many funders mandate that research should be publicly available through Open Access publication; we feel that the rheumatology research landscape should provide as full a picture as possible to meet the needs of researchers and fully inform the ongoing improvements in healthcare outcomes. *RMD Open* will therefore combine the benefits of Open Access while always maintaining a high standard of scientific rigour in the form of peer reviews expected by EULAR and BMJ. These elements, together with an experienced and respected editorial team of experts led by Professor Bernard Combe, Editor-in-Chief, and the trusted brands of EULAR and BMJ, will insure that the research community is provided with a high quality, valuable and trustworthy new resource.

RMD Open aims to publish any well-conducted study or design protocol that adds to the overall body of knowledge available in the public domain, in the areas of basic/translational as well as clinical science. These will be freely available, unrestricted, to research globally and published online within 20 days of acceptance.

In the initial stages, readers will determine the influence of *RMD Open* papers on an individual basis rather than by impact factor, which will certainly grow over time. Article-level metrics, which will include downloads, views and citations, will be provided, and readers will have the opportunity to engage through rapid responses available in each article. The impact of articles through sharing on social media sites, public media activity and twitter will all add to the overall influence of the published research.

RMD Open will provide authors with visibility and a global audience—and a trustworthy home for high-quality research. We are confident that *RMD Open* will soon be an important journal and communication platform for the entire rheumatological community.

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