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Arthritis: Act before it gets Late

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The theme for this year's World Arthritis Day is Ã¢â?¬Ë?It's in your hands, take action'.



Started in 1996, October 12 is recognised as the World Arthritis Day (WAD). Established by Arthritis and Rheumatism International (ARI) and supported by the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR), this day is a global initiative to bring people together help raise awareness of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs). The theme for this year's World Arthritis Day is **'It's in your hands, take action'**.

Aim of WAD

- to raise awareness of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases in all its forms among the medical community, people affected by any such condition and the general public.
- to influence public policy by making decision-makers aware of the burden of rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases and the steps which can be taken to ease them.
- to ensure all people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases and their caregivers are aware of the vast support network available to them.

About rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs)

RMDs are commonly classified into inflammatory and non-inflammatory types: Common non-inflammatory RMDs consist of **degenerative spine diseases, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis and fibromyalgia** Common inflammatory RMDs consist of **rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, reactive arthritis, connective tissue diseases and polymyalgia rheumatica.**

They are characterized by pain and a consequent reduction in the range, motion and function in one or more areas of the musculoskeletal system; in some diseases, there are signs of inflammation: swelling, redness and warmth in the affected areas. Rheumatic diseases can also affect internal organs.

Diagnose early

Rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) often receive delayed or no diagnosis. Early diagnosis is key to preventing further damage. This is often due to a lack of awareness, reducing peoples' quality of life and affecting physical abilities. It is important to know the symptoms of RMDs and to contact a healthcare professional if you have concerns. If not treated appropriately, daily activities are affected- reducing people's quality of life and affecting physical abilities.

Causes, symptoms and diagnosis

Several lifestyle factors such as smoking, excessive weight, sedentary lifestyles, increasing age and having occupations that lead to injury and overuse of joints/muscles, can trigger RMDs. RMDs may be hereditary in some cases, however, having a family history of RMDs does not confirm contracting an RMD. It is important to know the symptoms and then Knowing the symptoms will help you in understanding advice of the healthcare professional on how to manage the disease. Symptoms of RMDs include

- Inflammation indicated by joint swelling, stiffness, redness, and/or warmth
- Persistent muscle and joint pain
- Tenderness
- Extreme fatigue, lack of energy, weakness, or a feeling of malaise
- Stiffness and restricted range in movement or flexibility
- Joint deformity
- Symptoms affecting the internal organs
- Invisible symptoms e.g. depression and anxiety

It is vital to take immediate action at the onset of RMD symptoms. The symptoms must be analysed by a specialist rheumatologist as early as possible for appropriate treatment. Early medical treatment of inflammatory RMDs, particularly in the first 12 weeks, can prevent joint and organ damage, improve long-term function, and increase the likelihood of achieving disease remission.

Kids get Arthritis too!

1 in 1,000 children suffer from arthritis. In fact, paediatric rheumatic diseases affect more children than juvenile diabetes, cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy combined. Early diagnosis and treatment is critical to achieve disease control and prevent complications and deformity in children.

Treatment and Management

Managing the condition is the next step in the process of treatment once RMD is diagnosed. There is no single medication or treatment that works for everyone. However, there are treatments, including medication, that help manage pain and control RMD symptoms. Clinical remission, where the symptoms appear to cease, is increasingly being made possible. Physiotherapy is often advised to reduce the symptoms of certain RMDs.

Self-management is a key part of managing RMDs and can be life-changing. It is also crucial for emotional and physical wellbeing. Continuous support from local patient groups and organisations coupled with self-discipline can help people manage their RMD.

How can you help?

There are many local support groups and organisations who run RMD campaigns both for patients and caregivers. You can take part in the World Arthritis Day activity as well as upload your photos from activities and events to help raise awareness and inspire others. Alternatively, you can choose to organise an event and share your event to let everyone know about the great work you are doing.