

EULAR President: Application of anti-malarials to tackle COVID-19 raises vital issues for rheumatic disease community in Europe

3 April, 2020, Kilchberg, Switzerland – The European League Against Rheumatism, EULAR, welcomes global efforts aimed at increasing the information base around the potential for anti-malarial drugs in the treatment of COVID-19.

EULAR recognises that the application of anti-malarial drugs chloroquine (CQ) and hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) to the treatment of COVID-19 should be supported by an appropriate evidence-base as far as possible in this challenging set of circumstances presented by the current emergency, and to thereby offer the maximum benefit possible.

Concerning this matter, the EULAR Journal, The Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases, ARD, publishes a paper of utmost relevance in the present days of the COVID-19 pandemic addressing the hope and threats of antimalarial therapies during the COVID-19 epidemic: 'To Consider or not: anti-malarials as a prophylactic intervention in the COVID-19 pandemic'

In light of their in-vitro effect and early clinical results, anti-malarial drugs CQ and HCQ have been proposed to patients with COVID-19 – related pneumonia and are now included in the Chinese guidelines for the management of COVID-19.

EULAR President, Professor Iain McInnes, CBE, highlights 3 key issues here:

“EULAR welcomes the global efforts aimed at increasing the information base around the potential for HCQ/CQ in the treatment of COVID-19 to ensure that its application is as appropriate and evidence based as possible in these challenging circumstances and to thereby offer the maximum benefit possible.

“EULAR is concerned however that the diversion of drug supplies away from people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases may lead to adverse outcomes for this important and sizeable community in Europe and beyond. Our patient association membership pillar, People with Arthritis and Rheumatism in Europe, PARE, calls on manufacturers of these agents to rapidly upscale output to meet the increasing clinical need.

“EULAR calls for a balanced approach to ensure that we meet the ongoing pandemic imperatives but equally respects the needs of those also benefiting already from the use of this medicine; for some of whom this is an essential medication.”

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.

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Notes to Editors

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To consider or not antimalarials as a prophylactic intervention in the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) pandemic, *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*

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EULAR has launched the COVID-19 rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases reporting database, a European paediatric and adult database to monitor and report outcomes of COVID-19 occurring in patients with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases with the support of the Global Rheumatology Alliance: https://www.eular.org/eular_covid19_database.cfm

EULAR has released guidance for patients in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak. The guidance addresses typical questions that patients with RMDs have and recommends protective measures both for patients and the health care workforce. More information and a video can be found here: https://www.eular.org/policy_statement_on_covid_19.cfm