

EULAR
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ELDERLY PATIENTS ARE NOT AT INCREASED RISK OF SERIOUS INFECTIONS WITH NEW DISEASE-MODIFYING ANTIRHEUMATIC DRUGS COMPARED TO CONVENTIONAL SYNTHETIC TREATMENTS

German RABBIT registry data

Elderly people with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) are generally at increased risk of serious infections. At the same time, some anti-rheumatic treatments have been associated with a higher serious infection risk, but the extent to which older people are exposed to higher risks with some newer classes of therapy is an open question. Results of this study suggest that treatment with new classes of drugs is not associated with an increased risk of serious infection in elderly patients above 70 years of age.

New classes of drugs are biologic disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (bDMARDs) and Janus kinase inhibitors (JAKi). At the 2021 EULAR congress, Strangfeld and colleagues shared new data assessing the effects of these medications on the risk of serious infections in elderly people with RA. RA is an inflammatory autoimmune disease that causes pain, swelling and stiffness in the joints. RA can also cause fatigue, and the underlying inflammation may affect other body systems.

RABBIT is a prospective, observational cohort study in Germany. Patients with RA are enrolled when they start a new DMARD after failing at least one conventional synthetic treatment (csDMARD). This analysis included 2,274 people over the age of 70. In total, 626 serious infections were observed in 425 of these people.

Adjusted for those differences, serious infections were less likely in patients receiving bDMARDs or JAKi compared to csDMARDs, but this was not statistically significant. Associations with an increased risk of serious infections were seen for glucocorticoid use, higher disease activity, and having another underlying disease such as chronic pulmonary or kidney disease, or diabetes. The authors also found that better physical capacity was associated with a decreased risk of having a serious infection.

Overall, the results suggest that treatment with these new classes of drugs is not associated with an increased risk of serious infection in elderly RA patients above 70 years of age.

Source

Strangfeld A, et al. Elderly patients are not at increased risk of serious infections when receiving bDMARDs or JAK inhibitors compared to csDMARD treatment. Presented at EULAR 2021; abstract OP0116.

About EULAR

EULAR is the European umbrella organisation representing scientific societies, health professional associations and organisations for people with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (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.

About the EULAR European Congress of Rheumatology

Since its introduction in 2000, the annual EULAR European Congress of Rheumatology has become the primary platform for exchange of scientific and clinical information in Europe. It is also a renowned forum for interaction between medical doctors, scientists, people with arthritis/rheumatism, health professionals and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry worldwide. The EULAR congress is usually held in June in one of the major cities in Europe ([see previous congresses](#)).

The [scientific programme](#) at the congress covers a wide range of topics on clinical innovations, clinical, translational and basic science. Meetings set up by associations of people with arthritis/rheumatism, health professionals and the health care industry complement the programme. The poster sessions, offering lively interaction between presenters and participants, are regarded by many as the heart of the congress.

Over the years, the EULAR Congress has gained a reputation of being a most innovative platform for the practicing physician particularly with respect to the acquisition of information on novel clinical research. The congress attracts more than 18,000 delegates from more than 130 countries.

The aim of the EULAR European Congress of Rheumatology is to provide a forum of the highest standard for scientific, both clinical and basic, educational, and social exchange between professionals involved in rheumatology, liaising with patient organisations, in order to achieve progress in the clinical care of people with rheumatic diseases.

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