

Patients in Focus Award 2011

The Annual Patients in Focus awards were presented at the BSR conference in April 2011. Kanta Kumar received an award from her work in Birmingham developing an Asian language helpline for rheumatological conditions. Helen Nutland & Allison Dean also received recognition for developing *Wii* based exercises for people with RA and moderate to severe foot deformity. They each received a certificate and cheque from Ailsa.

Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis

We have been actively working towards developing a service for young people and the parents of children diagnosed with JIA. Our aim is to recruit somebody in the first half of next year to lead on providing a complementary service to that which we have already established for people with RA, namely helpline support, printed information, web-based services and a strong political voice nationally.

Promising research on a potential cause for RA

Little is known about why the body's own immune system starts to attack healthy tissue in autoimmune conditions like RA however recent research performed at the Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology, Imperial College may offer a clue as to the cause of RA in some. It is thought that a bacterial molecule that is known to be one of the major causes of periodontitis (a condition where the tissue that surrounds and supports the teeth becomes inflamed) may also be the cause in some cases. If this is the case, this offers fresh hope that we will one day be able to treat and prevent these cases with the use of medication that will inhibit this molecule.

For full articles, please refer to Autumn 2011 magazine



nras
National Rheumatoid
Arthritis Society

One of the benefits of becoming an NRAS member is that you'll receive a copy of our magazine which will bring you up to date with new developments, and what people with Rheumatoid Arthritis and NRAS are achieving. Here are some extracts from the Autumn 2011 magazine:

How to become a Member

If you wish to receive copies of our magazine then you will need to become a Member. You will also then be eligible to use the Members' forum on our website as well as receiving news and information by email on a regular basis and members' discounts which will be announced in the coming months.

You can join online at www.nras.org.uk or else call us on 0845 4583969

RA & smoking



We are all familiar with the risks associated with smoking, such as heart disease and lung cancer. However, are you aware of the impact that smoking can have on the development of RA?



The big business of complementary therapies

Complementary therapies are an area of great interest to many people living with RA, which should come as no surprise, given that people in the UK are reported to spend around £1.6bn per year on complementary therapies, with the US spending \$47bn.

Being told that you may need life long medication for your disease can be devastating, so it is not surprising that many will want to look for alternatives, with potentially reduced levels of side-effects. Unfortunately, only the standard disease modifying drugs have currently been found to slow down the progression of the disease, however, that does not mean that these therapies do not have a place alongside standard medications.

WorkWise resources available online

Following the success of the WorkWiseWorkshops last year we are delighted to be able to offer an online version of the resources on our website.

The section contain podcasts from expert speakers' which can be downloaded as well as frequently asked questions and transcripts of the presentations.

If you do take the time to visit, please give us your feedback by completing the short questionnaire.

What can I do to help myself when I have a flare?

Unfortunately, it is not yet possible to eliminate the unpredictable nature of RA and a flare of pain or more stiffness in the joints can occur from time to time. This may also be accompanied by feeling tired and somewhat unwell, often resembling the start of 'flu-like' symptoms.

Everyone's RA is unique to them—signs and symptoms vary as well as responses to treatment so the more you understand about your arthritis the better placed you are to put these symptoms to your health care team.

Could alcohol intake affect the likelihood of developing RA?

Many RA patients will be aware that they need to limit their alcohol consumption while on some medications. On methotrexate, for example, patients are advised to stay well within the maximum daily limits for alcohol consumption of 2-3 units for women and 3-4 units for men, and particularly that they should try not to exceed this in one sitting.



Recent research has also shown that alcohol may have an impact on whether or not someone develops inflammatory polyarthritis though the exact causes of RA are unknown, it has already been well established that people who smoke are more likely to develop the disease.

Dr Lahiri presented findings from the EPIC-Norfolk study and the Norfolk Arthritis Register at EULAR this year. The main problem with analysing the data was that people who were considered to be heavy drinkers were also more likely to be smokers, even adjusting for this, it was felt that by reducing alcohol intake there could be as much as a 16% reduction in the risks of developing polyarthritis for every unit per day less of alcohol that was consumed, making heavy alcohol consumption a strong risk factor for developing RA.

