

## Media Backgrounder

### MY DAY FOR RA:

#### *What is My Day for RA?*

*My Day for RA* is a pan-European disease awareness programme that encourages men and women with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) to dedicate a day to learn more about their condition and to set goals in order to feel more confident and empowered to manage their RA now and in the future. This effort may help people with RA continue to live productive, independent and fulfilling lives. The programme comprises two key elements including:

- *My Day for RA* Action Planner
- *My Day for RA* Event

#### *What is the My Day for RA Patient Action Planner?*

The *My Day for RA* Action Planner is an interactive questionnaire developed to help people with RA to develop a straightforward, personalised, action plan for the future. After using the Action Planner, people are encouraged to speak with their doctor and share their personalised action plan. The *My Day for RA* Action Planner can be accessed via

[www.MyDayforRA.com](http://www.MyDayforRA.com)

#### *What is the My Day for RA Event?*

A pan-European, celebratory event recognising people with RA who are confident that they are managing their condition in a way that allows them to live a fulfilling life. People with RA have been invited to share their stories at the *My Day for RA* Pan-European Event to help motivate other people with RA to manage their disease and live life to the fullest.

#### **FAST FACTS!**

- RA affects approximately one per cent of the adult population worldwide
- RA may reduce a patient's lifespan by about ten years<sup>1</sup>
- Twice as many women as men suffer from the disease
- Research has shown that 66 per cent of patients with RA lose on average 39 working days per year<sup>2</sup>

### ABOUT RA:

#### *What is rheumatoid arthritis?*

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic inflammatory arthritis that typically affects the hands and feet, although there are other joints that may be affected including the knees, hips and shoulders<sup>3</sup>. If the condition persists over time, it can cause permanent damage, including tendon, ligament, cartilage and bone destruction and deformity<sup>3</sup>.

#### *What causes rheumatoid arthritis?*

The cause of RA is unknown,<sup>3</sup> however it is thought that people can inherit certain genes that affect the way the immune system works.

### IMPACT ON PATIENTS:

#### *What are the symptoms of RA?*

Rheumatoid arthritis is a progressive disease with symptoms and evidence of joint destruction becoming increasingly worse over time which may lead to irreversible joint damage, work disability and functional decline<sup>3,4</sup>.

Clinical features of RA include:<sup>3</sup>

- Stiffness, commonly in the morning
- Joint swelling, which can occur in any joint but most often occurs in the small joints of the hands and feet and often symmetrically
- Tiredness, fever, weight loss and depression
- RA is also associated with a number of serious medical conditions including:
  - Irreversible joint damage which may lead to loss of function and premature death<sup>2</sup>
  - Increased risks of coronary artery disease<sup>3</sup> and infection<sup>4</sup>

### **Prevalence:**

- RA affects approximately one per cent of the adult population worldwide
- Twice as many women as men suffer from the disease
- RA can start at any age, but usually occurs between 40 and 70 years<sup>1</sup>

### **How is RA diagnosed?**

- An accurate diagnosis of RA can be difficult as there is no single test for the condition and the symptoms only develop over time
- The diagnosis is normally based upon a number of symptoms including the pattern of affected joints, X-ray and/or scan results which show joint damage, and high levels of an antibody called rheumatoid factor (RF) in the blood<sup>1</sup>

### **ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RA:**

- The economic burden created by rheumatoid arthritis in Europe is significant due to the high rate of indirect costs from work disability
- Prospective European studies indicate that 20-30 per cent of RA patients become work disabled during the first three years of the condition<sup>3</sup>

- Research has shown that 66 per cent of patients with RA lose on average 39 working days per year<sup>4</sup>
- In Europe, the indirect (work disability) and direct (medical care) costs of RA to society have been estimated at up to \$21,000 per patient per year<sup>3</sup>
- The impact of being unable to work and contribute to society can also serve to increase the likelihood of depression and anxiety arising<sup>4</sup>

### **TREATMENT OPTIONS:**

#### ***The need for early treatment:***

Joint destruction can occur rapidly in the early stages of RA and joint damage is evident in 70 per cent of patient X-rays taken within the first two years of the disease.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) can detect changes in joint structure from as early on as two months after disease onset.<sup>2</sup>

Because joint damage can occur very quickly at the beginning of the disease, there may be a need to initiate treatment very soon after an RA diagnosis, before a significant amount of irreversible joint damage has occurred.<sup>2</sup>

#### ***The treatment of RA:***

The treatment of RA has changed considerably within the past decade, moving from a conservative approach designed to control clinical symptoms to a more aggressive approach designed to limit joint destruction and disability.<sup>2</sup> The main goal of treatment for RA is to stop disease progression, otherwise known as achieving remission.

- RA is sometimes treated with drugs known as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen and other analgesics to relieve pain and other symptoms.<sup>1</sup>

- RA patients are also likely to be offered drugs known as disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs), so called because they affect the underlying disease process. DMARDs include methotrexate, sulfasalazine and ciclosporin, which all act to dampen down the immune system in one way or another.

DMARDs also include biologic therapies which are derived from human proteins rather than man-made chemicals. DMARDs act systemically, throughout the whole body.

### **For further information:**

Please contact your local Wyeth office for further information, or alternatively please use the contacts below. Further details are also available on [www.wyeth.eu](http://www.wyeth.eu).

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### **References:**

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