

EU shortage of arthritis drugs due to use as treatment for severe COVID-19 cases

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The European Alliance of Associations for Rheumatology, EULAR, wishes to highlight increasing shortages of vital anti-inflammatory drugs used in the treatment of arthritis, vasculitis and other inflammatory RMDs.

EULAR President, Professor Annamaria Iagnocco, says that "EULAR is

aware that more and more EU member states are experiencing shortages of essential anti-inflammatory drugs and that certain manufacturers have highlighted the prospect of global shortages in the upcoming months.

While recognizing that many drugs traditionally used to treat rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) have become leading COVID-19 therapeutics, manufacturers and governments must take urgent steps to ensure that this increased demand does not impact the lives and livelihoods of Europeans with RMDs.

These are [essential medications](#) for many people with RMDs such as arthritis and vasculitis that not only help to mitigate against disability, and the social and employment impacts associated with RMDs, but the development of common co-morbidities like cancer, diabetes and [cardiovascular disease](#).

EULAR calls for equal in access to these medications from [health care providers](#) and the relevant manufacturers; and we join with our patient association membership pillar, People with Arthritis and Rheumatism in Europe, PARE, in calling on manufacturers to rapidly upscale output to meet the increasing clinical need.

A balanced approach is essential to ensure that we meet the ongoing pandemic imperatives and respect the needs of those already benefiting already from the use of this medicine, for some of whom it is an essential medication."

For many COVID-19 patients, an overly vigorous response creates a severe systemic inflammatory state—the so-called cytokine storm—characterized by the creation of lots of inflammatory products and that can result in serious lung damage and death. This is how COVID-19 tends to kill.

When it became obvious that, in addition to the direct impact of the disease, COVID-19 was causing deaths through hyper-inflammatory states very similar to RMDs, rheumatology health professionals came to the fore. During the pandemic, many anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressant RMD drugs have been repurposed to treat patients with severe COVID-19 symptoms, particularly a class of [drug](#) called Glucocorticoids.

Provided by European Alliance of Associations for Rheumatology (EULAR)

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