

Pursuing Remission in Europe

Inflammatory rheumatic conditions place a heavy burden on patients. But remission – the disappearance of a disease’s signs and symptoms – can transform daily life by reducing pain and fatigue, restoring normal routines and improving overall well-being. Yet in Europe, many barriers stand in the way of remission.

Patient advocates and other stakeholders across Europe gathered to discuss barriers and solutions to achieving remission. The Global Remission Coalition is committed to shedding light on these challenges and advocacy priorities so patients across the region can access the full benefits of remission.



Barriers to Achieving Remission

While early diagnosis and timely treatment are proven to improve outcomes, patients in Europe often face systemic obstacles:



Limited awareness and understanding:

Many patients don’t realise remission is possible, or they confuse remission with a cure. Providers, too, may lack awareness of how to pursue remission or the tools needed to support patients.



Gaps in patient education and adherence:

Without clear guidance on adherence, side-effect management and lifestyle changes, patients risk falling out of remission or experiencing disease progression.



Care system challenges:

Patients often delay raising remission as a treatment goal, believing “some treatment is better than none.” Meanwhile, providers don’t always feel they have the flexibility to diagnose and treat early, which is key to improving remission rates.



Access barriers:

Inconsistent access to treatments and specialised care can prevent patients from receiving the optimal resources to pursue remission. In the UK, only 20% of people with RA are seen by a rheumatologist in the first 3 months.¹



Lack of data to drive policy:

Policymakers often don’t see the economic value of remission because data on cost savings and avoided hospitalizations are limited.



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Advocacy Priorities

To overcome these barriers and help patients pursue remission, advocates are calling for:



Heightened awareness:

Educating both patients and providers about what remission means and why it matters will help establish it as a shared care goal. In the UK, pilot programs connect patients with organizations to empower them with self-management skills.²



Strengthened patient-provider partnerships:

Encouraging shared decision-making allows patients to consider treatments and trade-offs with their providers, strengthening trust and collaboration.



Improved care systems:

Ensuring providers have the tools, resources and flexibility to diagnose early and prescribe the most appropriate therapies will yield better outcomes for patients. In Poland and Spain, programs were set up specifically for the prevention and early diagnosis of RA. They saw decreases in both temporary and permanent work disability.^{3,4}



Workforce support:

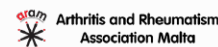
Remission supports a healthy workforce. By implementing workforce interventions, employers can aid early intervention and invest in productive labor. In the Netherlands, employers are legally required to take proactive steps during sickness absences.



Building the evidence base:

Generating and sharing data that highlights both the patient and economic benefits will help persuade policymakers to prioritise remission.

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The Path Forward

The sooner remission is achieved, the sooner patients and health systems can reap the benefits. But every region is different. By focusing on region-specific barriers and priorities, policymakers in Europe can better meet patient needs and advance the pursuit of remission.

References

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