

## Innovations in arthritis health care

### POS1571-PARE ONLINE COUNSELLING FOR PATIENTS WITH ARTHRITIS

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**Background:** The Covid-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of our lives. Perhaps the biggest changes have been in medical services. Institutes specializing in RMD in Serbia were part of the covid system and patients only had access in emergency cases, there was no regular examinations.

**Objectives:** The paper will show how the “Online Counselling for Arthritis Patients (OCAP)” worked during the pandemic, how many rheumatologists and patients were involved and were patients satisfied with the service provided.

**Methods:** Through the platform “Lekarinfo” ORS,<sup>1</sup> in cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, organized an OCAP. Patients were informed about the possibility of using online consultations with rheumatologists via social networks, viber groups, email ... and they were given instructions how to use it, they were advised to send medical documentation before, so the doctor has time to look at it, which gives more time for conversation. Consultations were held by phone or online, depending of patient's wishes and abilities. The time set aside with a rheumatologist was 20 minutes and with a psychologist 30 minutes. One psychologist and 23 rheumatologists were available. The ORS distributed cards to rheumatologists with all necessary data about OCAP to inform their patients.

**Results:** ORS conducted a Survey about OCAP. It was completed by 100 respondents, aged 20 to 75 of whom 75% were women. The 44% of respondents were from Belgrade, but it also included respondents from all over the country. RA have 61% of respondents, but patients with other types of arthritis were also included. 4/5 of patients are non-smokers and half of them are on biological therapy. All but one respondents are ORS's members.

The results of Survey are the following: OCAP was used by 27% of respondents and all of them were satisfied except one. Everyone would use it again and would advise others to do so. Online consultation can replace live examination, when the disease is in remission, thinks 62% of respondents. The majority (90%) found it technically easy to use it, but also the majority of respondents felt that there is a space for improvement (70%). One third prefers to have online consultations with their rheumatologist, Half of them understand the importance of telemedicine, 61% think that C-19 pandemic has increased the need for it and 64% think that digital solutions are our perspectives and it should be further developed.

**Conclusion:** It is desirable to continue with this kind of telemedicine. Patients and their families should be encouraged and educated about using digital platforms, aim is to explain them the benefits of telemedicine and that consultations do not necessarily have to be with their rheumatologists. Regardless of the pandemic, digitalization is in every aspect of our life, it is inevitable, but also it is a great advantage that should not be missed. Investments in the development of online platforms, that will facilitate patients access to doctors are an investment in self-control of chronic diseases in extraordinary circumstances, but also in normal conditions when because of the overscheduled doctors, lack of time for employed patients or other reasons, it is not possible for frequent examinations. Telemedicine is an investment not only in physical health but also in mental health of patients, having a doctor “just a step from you” has calming and positively affects for patients. And without positive attitude it's hard to keep a chronic disease under control.

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### POS1572-PARE HELPER'S WAY OF WORKING IN ORS BRANCH – NIS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN 2021

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**Background:** Helper is a person with RMD educated to help other patients. Based on the clearly defined authorizations this person helps in advising and information sharing among the ORS members.<sup>1</sup> Association of patients with rheumatic diseases of the Republic of Serbia (ORS) operates across the country

through the reference centers/ branches, but in pandemic the functioning of helper in an regular way was significantly impacted.

**Objectives:** In order to continue with the functioning in Association and with Helper during the Covid-19 pandemic, new communication and info-sharing methods has been applied. In this work will be shown how the strategy of communication was shifted from physical to digital, methods used for information sharing and communication tools of the modern world has been used for this purposes. Also, functioning of the branch in Niš and its Helper will be shown through statistical comparison of data prior and during the Covid19.

**Methods:** In the definition phase of Association's response on the new circumstances, it has been concluded that most of the members are using some of IM platform or e-mail. Based on this fact, out of 247 members of branch in Niš, 168 members have been joined through the most popular IM platform in Serbia – Viber. Through the group the patients has been sharing the information, notifications and other news important for the patients. Group administrators supported discussions, but also identified patients who did not use IM platforms and those members were notified by phone or e-mail. This method of communication was symbiotic with other projects of the Association because we used the same communication channels to increase the awareness of members about the activities of the Association.

**Results:** During 2019, Helper's work took place under normal conditions. At the Niska Banja Institute, Helper used the office where patients with rheumatic diseases used to come. Four lectures by eminent experts in the field of rheumatology and physiatry were organized, as well as socializing in the form of meetings and field trips. We marked the World Arthritis Day and the World Osteoporosis Day.<sup>2</sup> During 2021, most activities took place online or outdoors, depending on the intensity of the Covid-19 wave. Helper's work took place from home in January and February 2021, and from March to the end of 2021, Helper worked in the office. The lectures that were organized were exclusively online. We have marked the World Arthritis Day with a small number of participants. The event was realized with media support.<sup>3</sup>

Analysis and participation of members in 2019 and 2021 are shown below:

- In 2021, 208 vs 260 live contacts in 2019; on average 17 vs 22 contacts per month
  - In 2021, 216 contacts through online meetings; on average 18 per month. IN 2019 no such exercise.
  - In 2021, 2.000 vs 239 contacts in Viber group in 2019; on average 167 vs 20 members
  - In 2019, alternative communication methods were not used. In 2021, 1,023 contacts were made with messages, calls and emails, or 85 per month.

**Conclusion:** Based on the fact mentioned above, 2019 was richer and more fulfilling with lectures, socializing and direct contacts with members, while in 2021 communication was dominated by digital tools and methods (Viber groups, calls, emails) and consultation with doctors via e-consultations and by phone.<sup>4</sup>

The pandemic disabled direct contact with members of the Association and live lectures, but the Association used digitalization as a complement to new ways of working that connected us more than ever before, enabled instant transmission of information and created a basis for support at times when it was necessary the most. With this process in place, we not only fulfilled the goal of the Association, but we went a step further - we became the first contact for patients with RMD.

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### POS1573-PARE PATIENT-REPORTED OUTCOME MEASURES OF PAIN ALLEVIATION WITH CANNABINOID USAGE IN RHEUMATOID AND PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY.

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**Background:** Patient-Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) give us direct, immediate evidence of patient experience. Pain is a chronic, debilitating, multifactorial, presenting symptom that remains a difficult target to treat in populations with Inflammatory Arthritides.<sup>1</sup> Increasingly, cannabis products are being utilized and investigated for their potential analgesic and immune-modulatory effects.<sup>2</sup> The legislation and form of cannabis products deployed as therapy varies around the world and across populations. More data on usage and patient reported outcomes is needed to guide better clinical practice and inform sound legislative policy.