

# Greetings from the editor 2023/2

Josef S Smolen 

On the occasion of the 2023 Annual European Congress of Rheumatology, the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, the EULAR Journal, conveys cordial greetings to all participants of the EULAR Congress and to all its readers. For the first time since 2019, this Congress will be held as an on-site only conference in contrast to its hybrid nature in 2022 and virtually in 2020 and 2021. While owing to the pandemic, we have learnt that video conferences and virtual meetings have some merits, they just cannot replace live meetings in lecture halls, lively discussions in meeting rooms, body language beyond wordy expressions and face-to-face interactions at poster boards, in the corridors or when sipping a coffee with a colleague. Thus, this issue of *ARD* is dedicated to a return to normality—hopefully in health and great advancement of science.

The pandemic has clearly taught us how fast modern science can develop vaccines and what having vaccines may mean for rheumatology.<sup>1</sup> It has taught us to better manage and guide our patients in an unusual situation, from distant consultations to protection from infection<sup>2</sup> and provided new lessons on the importance of T-cell immunity on vaccination.<sup>3–5</sup> Nevertheless, the conundrum continues: why do so many people contract SARS-CoV2 infection despite having been vaccinated and/or previously experienced the infection? This is in stark contrast to the 94%–95% (sic!) protection from infection that the original trials had promised.<sup>6,7</sup> Is it just due to the viral variants? And if so, why? While it is for others to answer this question,<sup>8</sup> which will also be addressed in the journal in the nearer future, this has consequences for our patients,<sup>9</sup> even if, importantly so, some valuable protection through vaccination exists.<sup>10</sup> Hopefully, ways towards full protection will soon be found.

The pandemic has also brought most journals a hitherto unexperienced wealth of submissions during the years 2020 and 2021. *ARD* was no exception and the submissions had almost doubled during these years. This has been a big challenge

for the editorial team and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved again for the hard work, but especially also our authors who have submitted their research work trying to create evidence that had to be built. But double submission numbers do not mean doubling published items, because also in these years *ARD* looked out for novelty and quality. However, selecting the right papers at a time of no or only little knowledge in this unforeseen area was only possible with the tremendous help of the editorial board and the many referees who reviewed the submissions within a very short time frame, thereby providing the journal and the community with invaluable support and allowing quick decisions to be made on publications in a rapidly evolving field.

The pandemic is essentially over, but the war in Europe is not. Exactly a year ago, *ARD* published an editorial on this catastrophic war that had been ongoing for few months by then, calling for peace in the Ukraine.<sup>11</sup> To my dismay, the Russian aggression continues. The war machinery is still rolling—a tragedy for the Ukrainian and Russian people, killing thousands and thousands of their young generation, destroying not only families, houses, hospitals, streets, cities, but also impeding cultural and scientific developments, aside from the massive economic consequences for Europe and the world. How can anyone explain that in the 21st century so-called leaders still have not learnt that attempting to destroy others has always also been disastrous for one's own population... May those responsible for the war awake and stop it as soon as possible—there have been so many deaths and every additional death is yet another piece of evidence of human failure.

In my 'Greetings' published at the time of last year's EULAR Congress, I had mentioned the friendly relationship between the EULAR Journal and ACR's *Arthritis & Rheumatology*.<sup>12</sup> This relationship has meanwhile been further expanded by organising joint sessions orchestrated by the editors of the two Journals at the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) and EULAR conferences. We started with this activity last November in Philadelphia and will continue it this year in Milan on Friday afternoon. Each

of the journal editors selects two recent papers that should highlight some of the many publication aspects in these two major societal journals, *Arthritis & Rheumatology*<sup>13,14</sup> and *ARD*.<sup>15,16</sup> If you have time, please join us at this session for a direct discussion with the authors of these publications. There will also be an opportunity to pose questions to Dr Solomon and myself regarding publication policies and other matters related to our journals.

The current issue contains a number of Recommendations and Points to Consider that have been developed by EULAR task forces<sup>17,18</sup> and other groups of investigators.<sup>19–21</sup> Developing such publications is a major endeavour within EULAR and the international rheumatological community and serve to advance our field by bringing together state-of-the-art information or updates to similar previous activities.

I would also like to direct you to the excellent review by Ospelt on epigenetic factors that drive joint damage.<sup>22</sup> And as always, papers on many topics in rheumatology, from rheumatoid arthritis to macrophage activation syndrome complete this issue.

An additional point regarding *ARD* is also newsworthy. As briefly mentioned in my 'Greetings' earlier this year,<sup>23</sup> the associate editors of *ARD* will develop virtual books named 'The *ARD* collection of...' comprising the most interesting publications on a specific theme published in the journal over the last 2–3 years. These virtual topic collections will bring together papers selected by associate editors who will highlight the importance of the latest findings published within the pages of *ARD* often months or years apart, in an editorial or brief review article. This activity is focused primarily at those readers who are not experts in the specific field and thus may have missed one or several of these publications. As a first virtual 'ARD collection', Dimitris Boumpas provides us with 'The *ARD* collection on lupus nephritis', summarising what has been going on in lupus nephritis in *ARD* in recent years.<sup>24</sup> Such virtual books will be presented every 3–4 months over the next 2 years and we all hope that you will appreciate the efforts made and especially the respective papers.

Let me please close by wishing you a successful EULAR congress—and wishing all of us peace for the world.

**Funding** The authors have not declared a specific grant for this research from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

**Competing interests** None declared.

**Patient consent for publication** Not applicable.

**Correspondence to** Professor Josef S Smolen, Division of Rheumatology, Department of Medicine 3, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria; josef.smolen.ard@meduniwien.ac.at

**Provenance and peer review** Commissioned; internally peer reviewed.

© Author(s) (or their employer(s)) 2023. No commercial re-use. See rights and permissions. Published by BMJ.



**To cite** Smolen JS. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2023;**82**:727–728.

Received 14 April 2023

Accepted 14 April 2023

*Ann Rheum Dis* 2023;**82**:727–728.

doi:10.1136/ard-2023-224301

**ORCID iD**

Josef S Smolen <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4302-8877>

**REFERENCES**

- 1 Winthrop KL, Whitley RJ, Aletaha D. SARS-cov-2 and the rheumatology patient: the last 12 months and a boost in the future. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2021;80:1249–51.
- 2 Ciurea A, Papagiannoulis E, Bürki K, et al. Impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the disease course of patients with inflammatory rheumatic diseases: results from the Swiss clinical quality management cohort. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2021;80:238–41.
- 3 Bonelli MM, Mrak D, Perkmann T, et al. SARS-cov-2 vaccination in rituximab-treated patients: evidence for impaired humoral but inducible cellular immune response. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2021;80:1355–6.
- 4 Swadling L, Diniz MO, Schmidt NM, et al. Pre-Existing polymerase-specific T cells expand in abortive seronegative SARS-cov-2. *Nature* 2022;601:110–7.
- 5 Pisetsky DS, Winthrop KL. In the shadow of antibodies: how T cells defend against COVID-19. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2022;81:757–9.
- 6 Polack FP, Thomas SJ, Kitchin N, et al. Safety and efficacy of the bnt162b2 mRNA covid-19 vaccine. *N Engl J Med* 2020;383:2603–15.
- 7 Baden LR, El Sahly HM, Essink B, et al. Efficacy and safety of the mrna-1273 SARS-cov-2 vaccine. *N Engl J Med* 2021;384:403–16.
- 8 McLean G, Kamil J, Lee B, et al. The impact of evolving SARS-cov-2 mutations and variants on COVID-19 vaccines. *MBio* 2022;13:e02979-21.
- 9 Stalman EW, Wieske L, van Dam KPJ, et al. Breakthrough infections with the SARS-cov-2 omicron (B.1.1.529) variant in patients with immune-mediated inflammatory diseases. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2022;81:1757–66.
- 10 Papagoras C, Fragoulis GE, Zioga N, et al. Better outcomes of COVID-19 in vaccinated compared to unvaccinated patients with systemic rheumatic diseases. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2022;81:1013–6.
- 11 McInnes IB, Iagnocco A, Aletaha D, et al. Reflections on a contemporary European tragedy. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2022;81:747–8.
- 12 Smolen JS. Greetings from the editor. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2022;81:748–50.
- 13 Terkeltaub R, Lee J, Min J, et al. Serum urate-lowering efficacy and safety of tigulixostat in gout patients with hyperuricemia: a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, dose-finding trial (clue). *Arthritis Rheumatol* 17, 2023.
- 14 Liew JW, Rabasa G, LaValley M, et al. Development of an MRI-based definition of knee osteoarthritis: data from the multicenter osteoarthritis study. *Arthritis Rheumatol* 24, 2023.
- 15 Smith RM, Jones RB, Specks U, et al. Rituximab versus azathioprine for maintenance of remission for patients with ANCA-associated vasculitis and relapsing disease: an international randomised controlled trial. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2023. 10.1136/ard-2022-223559. [Epub ahead of print 23 Mar 2023].
- 16 Huss V, Bower H, Hellgren K, et al. Cancer risks with jaki and biological disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs in patients with rheumatoid arthritis or psoriatic arthritis: a national real-world cohort study. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2023. 10.1136/ard-2022-223636. [Epub ahead of print 3 Mar 2023].
- 17 Fragoulis GE, Nikiphorou E, Dey M, et al. 2022 EULAR recommendations for screening and prophylaxis of chronic and opportunistic infections in adults with autoimmune inflammatory rheumatic diseases. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2023;82:742–53.
- 18 Rodríguez-Carrio J, Burska A, Conaghan PG, et al. 2022 eular points to consider for the measurement, reporting and application of IFN- $\gamma$  pathway activation assays in clinical research and practice. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2023;82:754–62.
- 19 Aletaha D, Kerschbaumer A, Kastrati K, et al. Consensus statement on blocking interleukin-6 receptor and interleukin-6 in inflammatory conditions: an update. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2023;82:773–87.
- 20 Navarro-Compán V, Boel A, Boonen A, et al. Instrument selection for the ASAS core outcome set for axial spondyloarthritis. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2023;82:763–72.
- 21 Smith EMD, Aggarwal A, Ainsworth J, et al. Towards development of treat to target (T2T) in childhood-onset systemic lupus erythematosus: pres-endorsed overarching principles and points-to-consider from an international Task force. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2023;82:788–98.
- 22 Ospelt C. Site of invasion revisited: epigenetic drivers of joint destruction in RA. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2023;82:734–9.
- 23 Smolen JS. Greetings from the editor 2023. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2023;82:1–2.
- 24 Kostopoulou M, Fanouriakis A, Bertsias G, et al. Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases collection on lupus nephritis (2019–2022): novel insights and advances in therapy. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2023;82:729–33.