**ACTA EULAR Standing Committee on Epidemiology and Health Services Research (12/06/09)**

**Current Activities**

The standing committee has a number of major activities under various stages of progress.

**Recently completed activities**


**Task Force on Ethical Issues in Multinational Studies.** The report of the Task Force (Convenor: Angela Zink, Berlin) has now been published (Zink A, Silman AJ. Ethical and legal constraints on data sharing between countries in multinational epidemiological studies in Europe report from a joint workshop of the European League Against Rheumatism standing committee on epidemiology with the "AutoCure" project. Ann Rheum Dis. 2008 Jul;67(7):1041-3).

**Ongoing Activities**

**Task force on new Criteria for Rheumatoid Arthritis.** A major activity has been on the now joint ACR/EULAR initiative on developing new criteria for rheumatoid arthritis appropriate for newly presenting patients with inflammatory polyarthritis. The EULAR component (convenor Daniel Aletaha, Vienna) has completed its phase on identifying the relative contribution of different clinical and laboratory parameters to classifying an individual as having RA, based on the decision to start disease modifying therapy (especially methotrexate). A second workshop to be held in Chicago at the end of May will investigate how clinicians make the same decision based on patient scenarios. At the end of this meeting there will be a joint ACR/EULAR task force meeting attempting to emerge with the final agreed criteria set, which will be validated and ready for presentation at ACR annual meeting in Philadelphia.

**Database on burden of rheumatic diseases and their management.** The Standing Committee on Epidemiology sees as its major function in the next few years the establishment of a dynamic database covering the best available data on the occurrence, impact and availability of health care resources relevant to musculoskeletal disorders in the different European Countries. Part of this work will be achieved via a joint EULAR/EU sponsored initiative “EUMUSC.NET” and will also link with an international World Bank initiative updating data used in the Global Burden of Disease project.

- **EUMUSC.NET** is a consortium of 32 organizations with five co-op products: a map of MSK health in Europe, Standards of care patient-oriented, Standards for the providers of health, quality indicators of disease, and figures (surveys, etc). It is accessible to EULAR, which is a partner, although is run by independent researchers. It completely fits EULAR strategic plan. One of the major needs is contacts for epidemiological data
in every country, and so they are running surveys on the available information at a national level.

- **Global Burden Disease Project** is a project to calculate DALys in several MSK diseases, based on prevalence and natural history, as well as on disability. They have identified 22 health states within the diseases that describe MSK diseases and then they assign disability weights to them. They are undergoing a systematic review of the prevalence and incidence of MSK diseases. They will produce a list with all data by country, and estimates by region and by country, and will pass to SCHER members to confirm (data quality checklists in Excel format).

**Task Force on Requirements for Observational Treatment Registers.** Under the joint leadership of Johan Askling (Stockholm) and Will Dixon (Manchester) a task force met in Zurich late last year. A draft report has been produced and comments from all the contributors have been received leading to a final draft ready for submission in the next month or so. The second phase of the project is an implementation workshop aimed at rolling out the plans to a wider community. A projected date is Autumn 09.

**Referral Guidelines for Inflammatory Polyarthritids.** A scoping meeting between ACR and EULAR (Joint Convenors: Alan Silman, EULAR and Gill Hawker, ACR) is planned for Chicago 8 May 2009. The aim is to determine if there is a scope for a joint task force to develop guidelines for both patients and general practitioners on which patients with joint inflammation need to be referred

**New proposals for activities within the committee**

**ICD-11**

The International classification of diseases is going to be revised. Now the WHO wants a more descriptive version, as well as to revise the structure, and feed-back from physicians and coders. There were no groups in MSK disease in previous versions and one is being developed in Japan, mainly orthopedics, and in USA under the leadership of Jonathan Kay, internist and rheumatologist. Actually the Internal Medicine group is including several rheumatologists. Of note, the definition of MSK is to be revised, and rheumatic is to include not only inflammatory diseases. With regards to funding the Project, it is always difficult with WHO, as they see everything as a conflict of interest. There will be many virtual meetings. It is very important to include rheumatologists involved in the new classification criteria.

**Referral criteria / EULAR criteria for early RA**

We need a workshop to know what we know, as there are a myriad of initiatives on-going. ACR and EULAR should hold a specific conference with groups with an experience on it. A Silman will be in charge of such a meeting.

**Workshop for the standardization of patient outcomes**

It will be held at the EULAR house. It has been promoted by Marteen Boers.