



# ARAD Participant Newsletter

## ARAD Principal Investigators



Prof Catherine Hill



Prof Rachelle Buchbinder



Prof Lyn March



Prof Marissa Lassere

In this issue of the Australian Rheumatology Association Database (ARAD) newsletter, we provide some information about additional upcoming surveys and recent findings.

## Additional New Surveys

As part of ongoing research ARAD will be sending surveys on:

- Attitudes towards the prescription of biologic, biosimilars and vaccination (all ARAD participants completing questionnaires).
- ARAD participant perspectives on the role of microbiome, biobanking and data-linkage (200 RA and 200 PsA participants).
- Partner ability to cope with your diagnosis of RA (150 participants).

## Recent Findings

Information collected from ARAD participant surveys have been used by researchers and PhD candidates to investigate a number of areas. Recently ARAD has investigated:

### Cancer

Prof Rachelle Buchbinder and Dr Margaret Staples updated the cancer risk analysis in ARAD. This showed that use of TNF inhibitors (adalimumab, etanercept, infliximab, golimumab) did not increase risk of cancer.

### Methotrexate (MTX)

Dr Bess Leonardo, based at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, South Australia, has reported that RA patients have significant concerns regarding MTX and consult a variety of sources for MTX information. However, the patient perception of this information varies widely. Rheumatologists and educational websites are the most important information sources in terms of utilisation, positive information, and influence on the patient's perception of MTX.

### Complementary Medicine (CM)

Prof Rachelle Buchbinder and Ashley Fletcher (ARAD Project Manager) have reported on oral CM use. Almost 40% of people with inflammatory arthritis were taking at least one CM at entry into ARAD. There is a lack of evidence justifying use of most of these medicines other than possibly marine and plant oils.

### Glucocorticoids

Dr Rachel Black based at The Queen Elizabeth and Royal Adelaide Hospitals, South Australia investigated factors associated with oral glucocorticoid use in patients with rheumatoid arthritis. Findings showed that oral glucocorticoid use is used by 30-40% of people with rheumatoid arthritis, however this has decreased over time.

### Biologic switching in RA

Prof Rachelle Buchbinder and Ashley Fletcher (ARAD Project Manager) are analysing treatment pathways, showing that switching is common for those taking biologics with almost 50% of patients changing from one biologic to another. These results were presented by Prof Marissa Lassere at the American College of Rheumatology Conference in Atlanta in Nov 2019.

### Opioids

Rheumatologist and researcher Dr Bethan Richards based at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, presented factors associated with commencing and ceasing opioid therapy in rheumatoid arthritis patients. Findings showed that there was a higher prevalence of opioid use among RA patients. Glucocorticoid use and higher pain were associated with a higher risk of commencing opioids.

## Stiffness

ARAD and OMERACT (Outcome Measures in Rheumatology) are working together with the aim of including the patient's perspective on important outcomes in arthritis. Patients with arthritis say that joint stiffness is an important symptom but it is often not measured by rheumatologists or researchers.

Dr Rani Sinnathurai based at Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney, explored the dimensions of stiffness in rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis. She found participants thought about the effect of stiffness on daily activities but not duration.

If you would like copies of any of these research papers, please contact the ARAD team ([arad@monash.edu](mailto:arad@monash.edu)).

## ARAD PhD Candidates

Dr Premarani Sinnathurai PhD awarded May, 2019 - Comorbidities and Patient-Centred Health Outcomes in Psoriatic Arthritis.

Dr Rachel Black PhD awarded August 2019 - The Epidemiology and Patient Perspectives of Glucocorticoid Use and Adverse Effects in Rheumatoid Arthritis and Other Inflammatory Diseases.

Dr Bethan Richards PhD submitted Sept 2019 - Pain Management in Inflammatory Arthritis.



## Awards

Dr Oscar Russell (Masters Student) won the Best Oral Presentation by Clinical Trainee at TQEH Research Expo 2019 for analysis of socioeconomic status and medication use in ARAD.

Dr Rachel Black has been awarded the Barbara Cameron Australian Rheumatology Association Research Establishment Fellowship for the project 'Reassessing the Mortality Gap in Rheumatoid Arthritis in Australia'

Photo: L-R: Prof Catherine Hill (ARAD PI), Dr Oscar Russell (Masters Student), Ms Susan Lester (TQEH Researcher)

## Online Web-Based Questionnaire

More than 70% of ARAD participants complete their questionnaires online, saving about 20 minutes compared to the papers version. If you are still doing paper questionnaires and can change to online it would save a lot of time.

Simply email us at [arad@monash.edu](mailto:arad@monash.edu) with your preferred email address and we will email you the secure link.

## Participation in ARAD

We greatly value your participation in ARAD and this allows us to do important research in Australians with arthritis. Participation in ARAD is voluntary which means that you are free to discontinue from the project at any time. If you wish to discontinue with the questionnaires, ARAD would still like to continue to use your information to monitor for any changes in your health statistics through linking to government registers of prescription medications, hospitalisations, cancers and deaths.

If you wish to discontinue completing the ARAD questionnaires and/or decline ARAD accessing your information, please write, fax, email or call to notify us of this on ONE of the following:

**Write to:**

ARAD DMC  
DEPM  
Monash University  
Reply Paid 83087  
Melbourne 3004

**Fax:**

18000 220 730

**Email:**

[arad@monash.edu](mailto:arad@monash.edu)

If you no longer wish to complete questionnaires for ARAD, ARAD thanks you for your participation so far. Should you wish to recommence, please contact [arad@monash.edu](mailto:arad@monash.edu) so ARAD can update your details and get you active in ARAD again!