

---

# Rheumatoid Arthritis

# What is it?

- There are over 100 conditions related to arthritis
  - Ranging from mild to severe forms
- Arthritis is commonly associated with joint pain from aging or injury, but forms such as rheumatoid arthritis (RA) can affect anyone, at any age
- RA is a progressive and disabling auto-immune disease<sup>1</sup>
  - It has serious physical, emotional and economic consequences<sup>2</sup>
  - It is characterised by inflammation of the lining at the joints
  - Inflammation at joints can lead to long term damage, chronic pain and restricted daily activity<sup>3</sup>



1. National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society ([http://www.rheumatoid.org.uk/index.php?page\\_id=36](http://www.rheumatoid.org.uk/index.php?page_id=36) last accessed 5 March 2008)

2. Markenson JA. Worldwide trends in the socioeconomic impact and long-term prognosis of rheumatoid arthritis. *Semin Arthritis Rheum.* 1991;21:4-12.

3. Arthritis Analysis (<http://www.arthritisanalysis.com/category/symptoms/> last accessed 5 March 2008)

# Who is Affected?



- RA affects over 21 million people worldwide <sup>4</sup>
- There are about 3 million people living with RA in Europe <sup>5</sup>
- RA affects 3 times as many women as men <sup>6</sup>
- It can affect people of all ages but it is most common in the 30-50 age range <sup>7</sup>

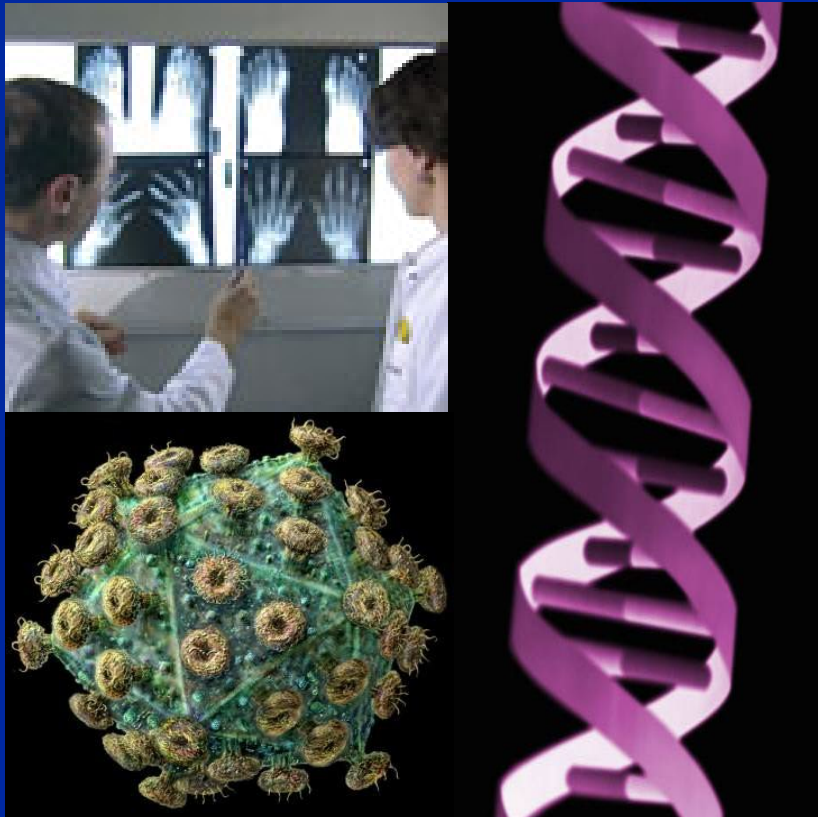
4. United Nations World Population Database, 2004 revision. (<http://use.un.org/unpp>)

5. Weinblatt ME. Rheumatoid arthritis: treat now, not later [editorial]. *Ann Intern Med.* 1996;124:773-774

6. Arthritis Research Campaign (<http://www.arc.org.uk/arthritis/patpubs/6033/6033.asp> last accessed 05 March 2008)

7. Arthritis Care (<http://www.arthritiscare.org.uk/AboutArthritis/Conditions/Rheumatoidarthritis> last accessed 05 March 2008)

# What are the Causes of RA?



- The exact cause of RA is unknown<sup>8</sup> and, as yet, there is no cure
- It is different from osteo-arthritis, which is caused by wear and tear in the joints

# What are the Symptoms of RA?



- Inflammation at the joints
- Pain and loss of strength
- Movement limitation around joints of the hands, feet, elbows, knees and neck
- Feeling generally unwell and fatigued
- Stiffness in the morning and after sitting still for a long time<sup>9</sup>



# What is the Impact on the Economy?

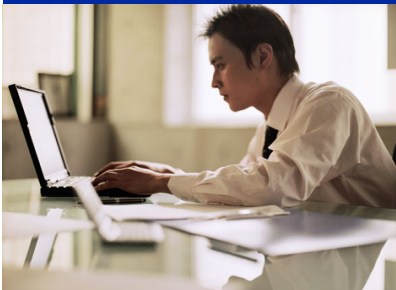


- Direct costs (hospitalisations, treatments, diagnostics) is estimated to be €14 billion per year in Europe<sup>10</sup>



- Indirect costs (productivity losses and informal care) are estimated

at €17 billion per year in Europe<sup>10</sup>



- Within ten years of the start of the condition, at least half of people with RA are unable to work<sup>10</sup>

# What is the impact on the individual?



- People often live with RA for 30 years or more <sup>11</sup>
- The disease not only affects people with RA but those who are close to them including family, friends, colleagues and neighbours
- Some people with RA feel they are unable to care for their family and plan for the future <sup>12</sup>
- RA has one of the worst quality of life scores within chronic diseases, similar to that of multiple sclerosis <sup>13</sup>



11. Joˆnsson B. Patient access to rheumatoid arthritis treatments European Journal of Health Economics (2008) 8 (Suppl 2):S35–S38

12. Survey of Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients. A report for the Arthritis Foundation

13. Lundkvist J, Kasting F, Kobelt G. The burden of rheumatoid arthritis and access to treatment:health burden and costs. Eur J Health Econ (2008) 8 (Suppl 2):S49–S60