

First *ARISE with APLAR* Forum Addresses Spondyloarthritis Burden in China

The partnership of the Asia Pacific League of Associations for Rheumatology (APLAR) with the Janssen pharmaceutical companies of Johnson & Johnson to improve the treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) and spondyloarthritis (SpA) patients reached a new height in China last week with the successful convening of an educational seminar in Changsha City, Hunan province. The forum was the first of its kind in Asia Pacific aimed at bringing the benefits of world-class medical treatment of SpA to a broader cross-section of the Asia Pacific.

It is estimated that 24 million patients worldwide suffer from RA alone, reducing their ability to be productive and economically independent. According to a recent research study, if treated only for its symptoms, RA can also lead to long-term disability and reduce a person's lifespan by 10 years. While the global burden of SpA is also significant, estimating the true burden of both it and other rheumatic diseases is difficult due to missed diagnosis and slow referral to specialists.

In September, APLAR entered into a strategic cooperation with Janssen Asia Pacific through a Medical Education partnership, *ARISE* (Asia Pacific Rheumatology Intensive Scientific Education), to address the growing healthcare burden of RA and SpA in Asia Pacific. The partnership combines APLAR's knowledge and experience as Asia and the Middle East's leading rheumatology society—one of the biggest rheumatology associations in the world—with Janssen's global leadership in Immunology. Together, APLAR and Janssen seek to spearhead the fight against arthritis in the region through the delivery of state-of-the-art care and increased awareness and understanding of rheumatic diseases.

It is estimated that at least 5 million people suffer from RA and 4 million from ankylosing spondylitis (AS) in China, where the diseases remain under diagnosed and not well understood by the public. Thanks to the support of the China Medical Education and Janssen colleagues in China, the conference in Hunan was organized successfully, with four scientific lectures delivered and more than 70 rheumatologists in attendance under the chairmanship of the President of APLAR, Prof. Zhanguo Li, who is also the President of the Chinese Rheumatology Association and President of the Clinical Immunology Association of China.

"Addressing unmet medical needs in rheumatology is a major challenge for APLAR, and we are delighted to be able to make a bigger difference by partnering with one of the world's leaders in Immunology", said Prof. Li. "The combination of our respective strengths will allow us to do so much more for our patients," he added.

The Hunan forum was the first educational event under the *ARISE with APLAR* partnership and one of the first of such high-end, practical events for rheumatology in the region. "The fact that our first event was launched in China carried an important meaning for Janssen, and we expressed our commitment to providing more biologic agents to rheumatologists and patients in the future," said Liu Yan, Leader of Janssen Immunology Customer Value Team in China.

Following the success in China, similar events will be arranged across the region. In China specifically, it is expected that a steering committee will be established, and a series of medical education programs to tackle RA and SpA will be organized in the country in 2013. These ARISE with APLAR events will be aimed at addressing the unique challenges of treating RA and SpA in the region, including late referral and diagnosis, higher rates of TB detection, poor patient compliance, limited access to newer medicines, and low public awareness and understanding of the disease.

