



Congress Interviews

Xenofon Baraliakos, Jette Primdahl, Daniel Aletaha, Andrew Cope, and Mwidimi Ndosu spoke with EMJ, sharing their insights from this year's EULAR Congress. The experts discussed the expansion of research areas to include polymyalgia rheumatica, vasculitis, and rheumatic diseases in pregnancy. As well as the importance of quality care and patient safety in rheumatology and enhancing global collaboration and education.



Xenofon Baraliakos

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Q1 Since our last interview, how has your journey in rheumatology evolved, particularly in your role as a professor and researcher at Ruhr-Universität Bochum?

Thank you, it has been and still is an interesting journey. We have grown as a department, have broadened our fields of research to other diseases beyond spondyloarthritis and psoriatic arthritis, and now want to help the field develop in areas such as polymyalgia rheumatica, vasculitis, pregnancy and rheumatic diseases, vaccination, etc. Rheumatology and immunology are an extremely dynamic field and my whole team is happy to be part of and lead these developments.

Q2 What continues to inspire you in the field of rheumatology, and have there been any pivotal moments or influences in your career recently?

A big inspiration is that rheumatology as a discipline does not stop developing at a very fast speed. For more than 20 years we have seen at least one new

piece of fundamental knowledge reaching the clinical field. This is inspiring and motivating.

Q3 Your research has significantly impacted the field of axial spondyloarthritis and psoriatic arthritis. What do you consider the most groundbreaking aspect of your work?

The most groundbreaking aspects have been in the development of knowledge and understanding of the imaging aspects of the disease, including inflammatory as well as radiographic aspects. I have been blessed to work with people who have supported me and also been fundamental in brainstorming and developing ideas, bringing them to life in the form of results and publications.

Q4 With an h-index of 82, your work has a substantial impact on the scientific community. What strategies do you employ to ensure your research remains relevant and influential?

This is the work of many, not just of a single person. The strategy is

simple: be creative, yourself, and open to ideas from the outside; try to think one step ahead of the current times; and of course, share the ideas with others. This means either benefiting from brainstorming or helping others to develop themselves, since this always comes back to you in a positive way.

Q5 Are there any gaps in the literature or unmet needs in the field of rheumatology that you aim to address through your future research?

I believe we are now at the moment of being able to speak about the role of translational research and its implications for clinical research. Both have been there for decades; however, I believe that we now can close the gap to connect them and truly aim for personalised treatments for our patients.

Q6 As the President-Elect of EULAR, set to begin your presidency in 2025, what are your primary goals and vision for the organisation?

I have many goals and visions that are related to all the developments the field of rheumatology has made in recent years. These don't have to be fancy changes, but I want to help, together with all other people at EULAR, past Presidents, and future ones, to establish EULAR and European rheumatology as the leading force in clinical, translational, and basic science in the world. Furthermore, I believe that we cannot reach all these goals without collaboration, this includes the opinions and ideas of patients and healthcare professionals.

Q7 How do you envision the future of rheumatology, particularly in terms of patient care and research advancements?

My vision is that we will be able to implement personalised medicine in our daily routine practice, getting the help of AI and specific tests that can maximise the effects of the available treatments for all our patients, independent of financial status or the healthcare system.

Q8 Can you discuss any recent technological innovations or methodologies in rheumatology that you find particularly promising?

At the moment, we are in the process of understanding what AI is capable of. Right now, I am not sure how fast this will go, and obviously (and luckily) this is a never-ending story since systems evolve with time. However, speaking about technological innovations and methodologies, we need to include the usage of current tools in a more optimised way. For example, the simple understanding of imaging procedures to avoid misdiagnoses or overtreatment. This is a really interesting part of medicine in general, where EULAR will also play a protagonist role in the near future.

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