

Comment on the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Report on Combining Rheumatoid Arthritis Treatments

The Arthritis Foundation commends the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality for informing the public -- including people with rheumatoid arthritis, the physicians who care for them and the insurance companies who provide coverage for them -- that combining synthetic drugs with a biologic is “often the best strategy to battle rheumatoid arthritis.” In agreement with the study authors’ conclusion that combination therapy is more effective than biologic therapy alone, the Arthritis Foundation believes these combinations should be available to all patients whose doctors recommend them.

The Arthritis Foundation will use these significant findings to communicate with the nation’s insurance companies and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services the message that access to combination therapy is essential for the health of people with rheumatoid arthritis. Barriers that exist in the insurance marketplace, including the lack of insurance coverage for all Americans, must be addressed by the nation’s policymakers to ensure that the more than two million people battling this serious chronic disease have access to these critical medications, which have been proven to prevent the disabling and permanent joint damage that can occur due to rheumatoid arthritis.

About Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is one of the more serious forms of arthritis and affects 2.1 million Americans. It is characterized by the inflammation of the synovium – the membrane lining the joint – which causes pain, stiffness, warmth, redness and swelling. The inflamed synovium can invade and damage bone and cartilage, leading to deformities of the joint, loss of joint movement, and limitations of activities requiring use of the joint. The disease usually begins in middle age, but can start at any age, including childhood. Rheumatoid arthritis affects two to three times more women than men.

For More Information

The Arthritis Foundation offers a number of resources to assist people with rheumatoid arthritis in finding information about treatments and managing their activities, including a free consumer brochure on rheumatoid arthritis and a free *Arthritis Today* Drug Guide, as well as books such as *The Arthritis Foundation’s Guide to Good Living with Rheumatoid Arthritis* and *Arthritis Drugs and More*. For more information, contact the Arthritis Foundation at 800-283-7800 or www.arthritis.org.

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