



Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance

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17 April 2020

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Cc: Baroness Barran MBE, Minister for Civil Society, DCMS

Dear Chancellor

ARMA is an umbrella body bringing together patient organisations and professional bodies representing the breadth of arthritis and musculoskeletal (MSK) health.

Every Monday we capture and collate frontline experience and learning from patients and healthcare professionals relating to COVID-19 and MSK care, which we then feed into NHS England decision-making via a joint leadership group working on musculoskeletal health during the crisis.

We welcome the government's announcement of support for charities and urge you to ensure this reaches patient organisations across the breadth of healthcare, (not just the organisations quoted by Government in the charity funding announcement last week). Patient organisations are doing so much to alleviate pressure on the NHS and get millions of those with arthritis and MSK conditions through the Coronavirus pandemic with the right support and information.

We particularly draw your attention to the fact that the arthritis and MSK patient organisations are:

- Ensuring the best up-to-date information is reaching patients and those who support them. This ensures that patients on immunosuppressant medication do not stop taking it, causing flares of their condition and a higher risk of infection.
- Handling hugely inflated call volumes, emails & online queries through social media channels and online forums. Many of these calls would previously have been handled by NHS services, but the staff providing this support have been redeployed to wards to treat covid-19 patients.
- Rapidly developing new services specifically to support their patient groups, many of whom are in the high risk and very vulnerable groups. This includes innovative ways to handle the increased call volumes, new online support services for those isolating/shielding and sources of support for those whose treatment has been delayed or who cannot access their usual services.
- Like other charities, experiencing steep drops in income, and facing tough decisions to furlough staff even though demand in service provision has risen exponentially and, in some cases, furloughing means cutting vital support services.

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The funding you have announced, provided it reaches these important charities, will mean they can continue to take pressure off the NHS. We would welcome confirmation that this will be the case.

Once again, we welcome the Government's hugely important announcement regarding financial support for charities and urge you to ensure that arthritis and musculoskeletal patient organisations supporting the NHS are included to ensure they can continue to play their part in defeating Coronavirus in the UK.

Yours sincerely,



Sue Brown,
Chief Executive, Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance (ARMA)



Shantel Irwin, CEO, Arthritis Action



Dale Webb, CEO, National Axial Spondyloarthritis Society



Steve Aspinall, Chief Executive, British Association of Sport Rehabilitators



Clare Jacklin, Chief Executive, National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS)



Catherine Quinn, President, British Chiropractic Association



Humphrey Hodgson, Chair, Polymyalgia Rheumatica & Giant Cell Arteritis UK



British Orthopaedic Association

Justine Clarke, Chief Operating Officer, British Orthopaedic Association



Lucy Douglas, President, Primary Care Rheumatology & Musculoskeletal Medicine Society



Sandy Weatherhead, Executive Director, British Society of Rehabilitation Medicine



Helen McAteer, Chief Executive, Psoriasis Association



Karen Middleton, Chief Executive, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy



Kalveer Flora, Chair, Rheumatology Pharmacists UK



George Dunn, Chair, College of Podiatry



Robert Field, Chair, Rheumatology Podiatry Network



Kay Julier, Managing Director, Ehlers-Danlos Support UK



Rob Finch, Chief Executive, Royal College of Chiropractors



Yvonne Gilbert, Head of Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine, Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine



Craig Jones, Chief Executive, Royal Osteoporosis Society



Donna Wicks, CEO, Hypermobility Syndromes Association (HMSA)



Sue Farrington, CEO, Scleroderma & Raynaud's UK (SRUK)



Paul Howard, Chief Executive, Lupus UK



Graham N. Smith, Chairman, The Society of Sport Therapists



Helen Welch, Chair, Musculoskeletal Association of Chartered Physiotherapists (MACP)



Lynsey Conway, Chief Executive, UK Gout Society