

# *Statement of Consensus on* **Support for Autoimmune Patients in Spain**

Spain was one of the European countries hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic with the government implementing strict measures to control the spread of the virus. The COVID-19 pandemic had a far-reaching impact on society, affecting the physical, mental, and economic well-being of individuals and communities. Beyond that, however, autoimmune patients faced additional challenges: misinformation, vaccination and treatment risks, and a lack of clear vaccine guidelines.

Immunocompromised patients were opened up to the unknown, and caring for their health became even more complex, as they had to balance the risk of COVID-19 with the need to manage their disease.

As experts look toward the future, the potential of another pandemic looms large. Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic can serve patients and health care providers well as they consider potential solutions and strive to support the autoimmune community.

Several key principles should guide health policy for autoimmune patients as Spain moves forward.



**Patients need clear, open channels of communication to connect with specialists, contact providers and access necessary information.** Muddled information or a lack of information can impede autoimmune patients from making informed decisions about their health. Opportunities for healthcare providers and patients to engage in an active dialogue can help to dispel misinformation and clarify the best path forward.



**Autoimmune patients need advice and vaccine guidelines tailored specifically for them.**

Autoimmune patients face unique challenges that can impact their everyday lives. Policymakers must recognise the specific threats that autoimmune patients face, acknowledge that their circumstances differ from those of the general population and develop vaccine guidelines that address the autoimmune community's concerns.



**Stakeholders must leverage the existing infrastructure to engage with and support autoimmune patients.**

Patient groups and advocacy networks banded together during the COVID-19 pandemic. Those relationships can now facilitate broad support and engagement as the autoimmune community braves new challenges.



**Treatments and vaccines must consider patients who are at severe risk.**

Autoimmune patients have a higher risk of severe disease and may have poor reactions to treatments and vaccinations. As products and vaccines guidelines are being developed, researchers, manufacturers and policymakers must consider the adverse risks experienced by autoimmune patients.

In conclusion, the safety and well-being of autoimmune patients should remain a top priority among health authorities, patient groups and health care providers.

We, the undersigned, commit to continued support and collective advocacy on behalf of autoimmune patients as they face future pandemics or public health challenges.

## Signatories

**European Alliance for Patient Access**

**Asociación Española de Cáncer de Tiroides**

**Federación Española de Lupus**

**Fundación GAEM**

**Liga Reumatológica Española**

**Lupus Europe**



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