

VALUE OF REMISSION

An Advocacy Roundtable Summary

Barranquilla, Colombia • April 2024



Local Solutions for a Global Issue

On April 11, 2024, a group of 15 advocacy leaders from across Latin America came together adjacent to the Annual Congress of the Pan-American League of Associations for Rheumatology to discuss the value of achieving remission for patients with inflammatory rheumatic diseases. They expanded on an initial report and identified challenges and solutions specific to their region.

 [REVIEW THE REPORT HERE](#)

Understanding Remission

Inflammatory rheumatic conditions place a heavy burden on patients. But remission, the absence of disease signs and symptoms, can change patients' lives. Patients who achieve remission can see benefits such as reduced hospitalizations, enhanced economic productivity and improved patient outcomes. Their communities benefit too.

But challenges can crop up, preventing patients from accessing the care they need to achieve remission. Certain patient groups may be left behind, and the health care system may not have the resources necessary to care for patients.

These challenges are not without solutions, however. Greater integration throughout local health care systems and leveraging innovative

technologies can make it easier for patients to work towards remission.

Policymakers can support patients and providers in their pursuit of remission. Policies that make remission more likely will improve patients' quality of life, while paying dividends back to the health care system and the community.

Persuading Policymakers

Meeting participants agreed that policymakers play a crucial role in making remission possible. They recognized that many challenges, such as inadequate health care resources, can be addressed with appropriate policies. Advancements in medicine and innovation have expanded treatment options and made remission a real possibility for many patients, but access is necessary.

Advocates must demonstrate how valuable remission is, and participants explained that this is best accomplished by combining patients' lived experiences and scientific data. Data and stories are persuasive tools that highlight the impact of remission. Collecting this information and then making it all digestible for policymakers is necessary, meeting participants explained.

Each country's perspectives and priorities are different, but policymakers across Latin America can enact policies that encourage remission. Advocates, providers and patients can all demonstrate the value of remission to policymakers.

Preserving the Patient-Provider Relationship

Meeting participants highlighted that the relationship between patients and providers can have a significant influence on a patient's journey towards remission. Patients are more likely to adhere to their treatment when they are confident in their relationship with their provider. They must feel that they can trust their providers with their experience, and providers must feel equipped to educate patients on the path to remission.

Upon diagnosis, patients must be comfortable navigating their treatment path with their provider. Every patient's journey to remission – and to maintaining that remission – looks different, and patients and providers must be partners as they make decisions on treatment plans.

Participants also explained that patients benefit when care is provided by a multidisciplinary team. Different health care providers need to work together to provide patients with integrated and therefore optimal care.

Supporting Mental Health

Meeting participants highlighted that rheumatic conditions often take a heavy toll on patients' mental health. Patients may live for years with painful symptoms, which can lead to frustration, disappointment and even isolation. And patients may struggle to find the right provider or care team. The longer they are sub-optimally treated, the more their disease progresses and their mental health deteriorates.

Finding ways to support patients' mental health and provide them with comprehensive services is critical. Good policies can leverage technologies, help patients to self-manage and track their symptoms, and connect patients to support groups and communities.

Conclusions

Remission looks different from patient to patient, and achieving remission isn't a cure. Patients who achieve remission must also work to maintain it. The sooner a patient achieves remission, the sooner patients and the health care system can experience the benefits.

Meeting participants agreed that remission is an investment in a patient's health and well-being, as well as an investment in their community and the wider economy. Advocates in Latin America still have work to do to make remission a high priority, but participants strongly indicated that they are ready to raise awareness and advocate in each of the countries represented, as well as collectively across the region. Then it's up to policymakers to make remission a reality.



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The Global Alliance for Patient Access thanks AbbVie for the support that made this meeting possible.