

Annual Report

2015

JANUARY 2016

Successful Year is Behind Us, Says Prim. Dr. Mirjana Lapčević

In 2015 the Association of Rheumatic Disease Patients of the Republic of Serbia (ARS) rounded up its eighth year of existence. Having been the ARS President in two terms, I conclude that 2015 was a very successful one. That year we implemented two projects targeting our members: Osteoporosis Call Centre and RA Helper. For the first time we organized a self-help course to satisfaction of its participants. A smart phone application – RA Helper, was launched. Owing to the ARS's initiative and to satisfaction of all of us lectures have been delivered regularly at the Rheumatology Institute. The lectures on different topics will continue to be

given twice a month. We hope such education will become available in other rheumatology centres throughout Serbia.

The ARS branch at Military Medical Academy organized workshops covering osteoporosis, healthy lifestyles and decoupage. ARS Novi Sad attained discounts on public transportation tickets for another year.

Apart from continuing international activities (attending conferences and regional meetings, EULAR and Agora Congresses), we were granted a membership with European Network of Fibromyalgia Associations (ENFA) at the end of the year.



**Prim. Dr. Mirjana Lapčević,
ARS President**

In hopes of having 2016 even more successful, I wish you all happy holidays and the best of luck in your personal and professional life!

ARS Continued Dialogue with National Institutions throughout 2015

ARS President, Mrs. Mirjana Lapčević addressed the Republic of Serbia Ministry of Health and the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) on a couple of occasions in

2015, and she took part in meetings at the Ministry of Health together with Prof. Dr. Nemanja Damjanov, Director of the Institute of Rheumatology. Patients'

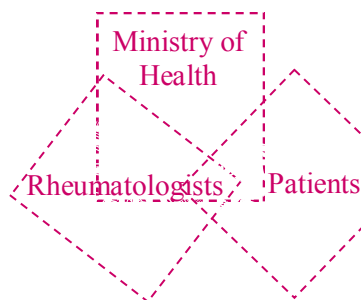
most pressing problems were presented at the meetings and some of the solutions were offered.

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ARS in numbers

- The number of members increased in 2015 for 8 %, today it counts 1362 members
- 16 lectures in total were given in Belgrade, Kragujevac, Niš, Novi Sad, Užice and Zrenjanin
- 61 members took part in RAS/ARS Congress
- We took part in 3 international and 4 regional meetings



Cooperation with National Institutions

ARS Continued Dialogue with National Institutions throughout 2015

"It is necessary to approve biological therapy for at least another 200 patients already processed by Medical Advisory Boards at relevant Centres, some of them presented to the Republic Committee already, and then to approve the therapy for another 200 patients each year", said prim. Dr. Mirjana Lapčević, ARS President, in the letter addressed to the Ministry of Health.

ARS President, Mrs. Mirjana Lapčević addressed the Republic of Serbia Ministry of Health and the National Health Insurance Fund on a couple of occasions in 2015, and she took part in meetings at the Ministry of Health together with Prof. Dr. Nemanja Damjanov. Patients' biggest problems were presented at the meetings and some of the solutions were offered.

The number of people treated by biological therapy (BT) in 2015 was the same as in 2014. For this reason, the Republic Committee for Approval of Biological Therapy cancelled the therapy to patients who had gone into remission by using the therapy. Another reason was potential unwanted consequences of unnecessary long-term therapy application, such as TBC. Pursuant to the reaction of these patients and their appeal at ARS, prim. Dr. Mirjana Lapčević addressed the Ministry of Health in May 2015. Dr. Dejan

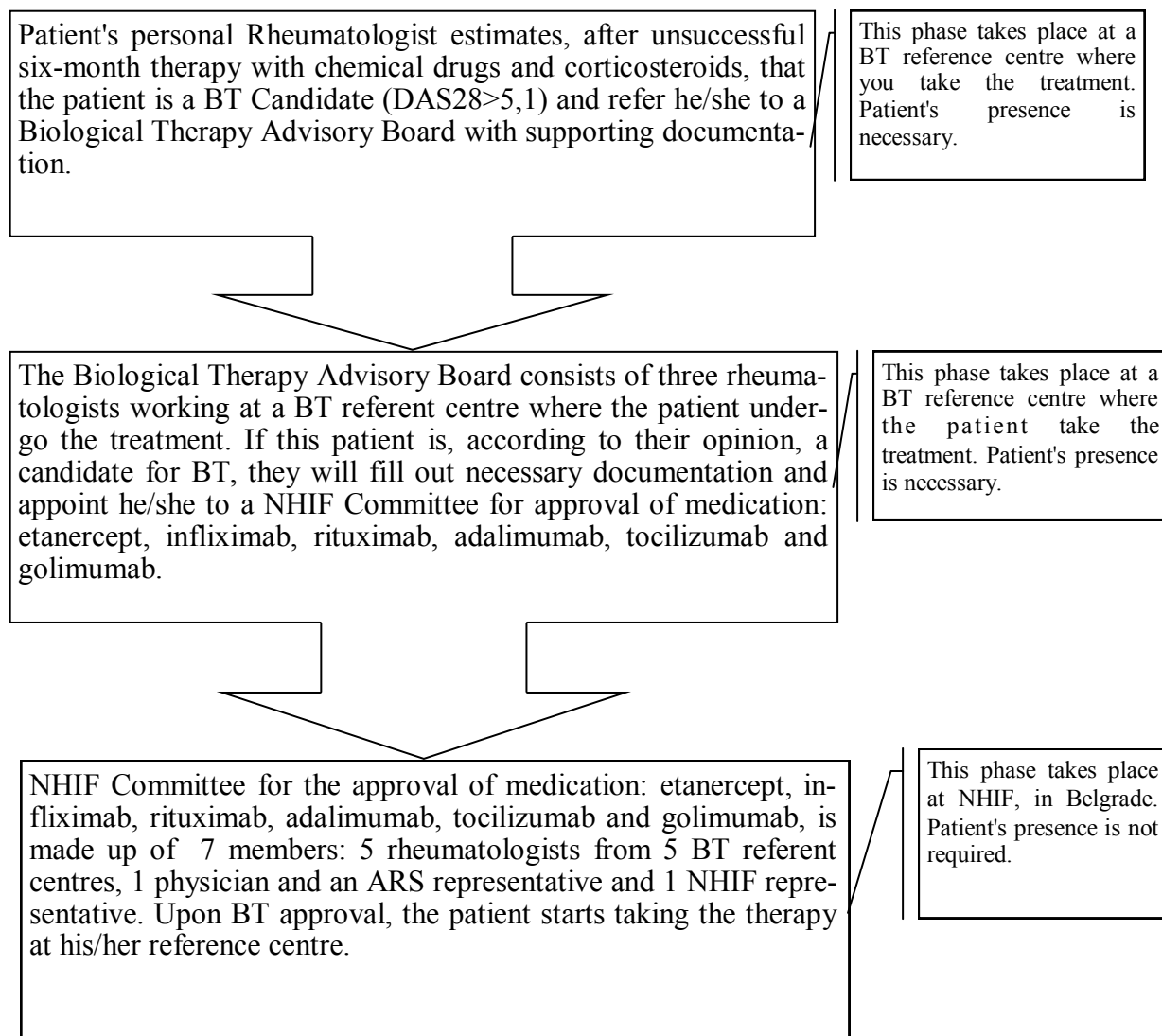
Kostić, a Ministry of Health spokesman, agreed with Dr. Lapčević about necessity for education of physicians and patients on early recognition of symptoms and prevention of rheumatic diseases, increase of the number of patients treated by biologic therapy, infirmary set up for patients with early arthritis, start up of reference centre in Kragujevac, and keeping national registry for inflammatory rheumatic diseases.

As the situation had not improved, Dr. Lapčević addressed the Ministry and the NHIF again in writing, which prompted a reply from NHIF at the beginning of December. This resulted with a meeting with representatives of the Ministry and NHIF. The meeting was also attended by prof. Dr. Nemanja Damjanov, Director of the Institute of Rheumatology.

Establishing of a national registry for rheumatoid arthritis and consequent benefits were discussed at

the meeting. Further points of discussion were formation of a republic rheumatology committee (currently operating as a Task Force within the Orthopedics Committee), and new regulations for health resort treatments, the making of which was being done with involvement of rheumatologists; it was further agreed to increase the number of patients treated with biological therapy, and establish the reference center for biological therapy in Kragujevac.

Biological Therapy Treatment Procedure



Many patients believe the BT is approved or denied by an “irrelevant” republic committee. On the contrary, the committee is made up of rheumatologists from rheumatology centres, one ARS representative and one NHIF representative.

The figure shows a scheme of decision making process for a patient on condition the BT, i.e. the funding for its approval, is available.

RAS/ARS Congress

The third RAS/ARS Congress was held on Zlatibor Mt, from September 16 to 19, 2015. The Programme aimed at patients was being held during the last two days of the Congress.

Over 300 rheumatologists and 66 patients from Serbia and region attended the Congress.



The opening ceremony showcased Serbian opera diva Jadranka Jovanović.



Dr. Lapčević wearing a "Register-Me" T-Shirt makes the story more convincing at her presentation on patient registration.



Workshop discussions were stimulating and constructive.



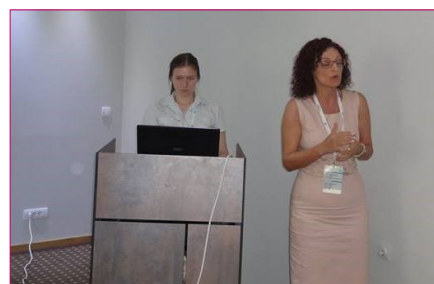
Sladana Đukić, a psychologist, occupying the attention of attendees with an interesting and educational presentation on communication.

On the first day of the program we could learn more about osteoporosis, its prevention and treatment from Dr. Gordana Janjić, the ARS MMA President and High School Teacher at the Medical School of "Beograd". Prim. Dr. Mirjana Lapčević, the ARS President emphasized the importance of setting up a national registry and regular data entry in the workshop "Register Me". The topic was equally discussed at a lecture organized for rheumatologists.

More than 6 hours of lectures and workshops for patients.



At the opening ceremony, the attendants were greeted by Dr. Nemanja Damjanov, then President of the Rheumatology Association of Serbia, prof. Dr. Maurizio Cutola, then President of EULAR, prim. Dr. Mirjana Lapčević, and other well-known and distinguished health professionals.



Dr. Gordana Janjić giving a lecture on osteoporosis and presenting the osteoporosis workshop she runs at the ARS.

This Congress too hosted the topics aimed at improving the relations between health professionals and patients. Thus, the workshop "Recommendations for Patients – a Good Relationship between a Health Professional and Patient" was held and delivered by three medical technicians Olivera Mladenov and Dragica Šapić, from the Institute of Rheumatology, and Anica Djokić from the Institute of "Niška Banja". The workshop was founded on basis of a document provided and translated into Serbian by

Agora (a platform of organizations of people with rheumatic diseases in southern Europe). On the second day, a joint lecture for patients and rheumatologists, named "Quality Communication – the Basis for a Successful Treatment" was held by psychologist Sladjana Djukic. She emphasized the importance of good communication and further skill improvement in this field, both of patients and doctors alike.

During the joint session, Prof. Dr. Nemanja Damjanov from the Institute of Rheumatology, gave an important lecture on "Screening for Tuberculosis Before and During the BT". It was followed by the lecture of Docent Dr. Mirjana Sefik Bukilica on lupus, recommendations received during the EULAR's Congress in Rome, and lecture of Docent Dr. Goran Radunovic on types of rheumatic diseases that can be treated in health centers. Marija Kosanovic (ARS), together with the Assist. Dr. Sci. Med. Predrag Ostojic, presented a guide for patients with rheumatoid arthritis, and the Project "Helper - Support for Patients." Jasmina Simic presented her fibromyalgia experience and Fibromyalgia Support Group that had started operating under her lead.



Prof. Dr. Nemanja Damjanov opened the joint session for patients and rheumatologists with a lecture on tuberculosis.

Organization quality was given 4.48 points, lecture selection 4.85 points (on the scale of 1-5), making the Congress better than the last year's.



Dr. Predrag Ostojic and Marija Kosanovic presented a brochure for RA, which had been produced by rheumatologists from the Institute of Rheumatology, psychologist Sladjana Djukić and Marija Kosanovic. For the first time, the reviewers were patients, members of ARS. Marija Kosanovic also presented the project "Support to Patients".



Second day continued with a Lecture on Lupus given by the Doc. Dr. Mirjana Sefik Bukilica.

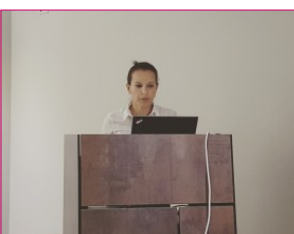
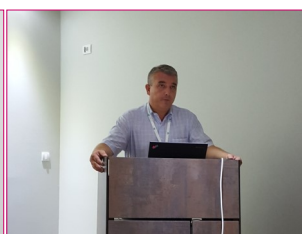


Young ARS members with rheumatologist pediatrician Prof. Dr. Jelena Vojinović.



Jasmina Simić, ARS Fibromyalgia Support Group leader, conversed with Dr. Goran Radunović during the break time.

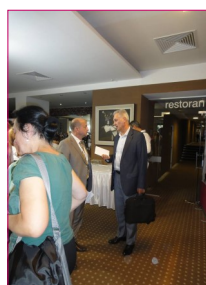
The Congress ended with yoga training! Milan Sudžuk demonstrated the exercise. This Congress was rated very positively, better than the last year's – the participants were satisfied with the choice of lectures and organization. They expressed the need for more relaxed program in the next year, i.e. to extend and increase the number of breaks for more efficient participation, and to increase the number of interactions and joint lectures between the rheumatologists and patients. They also expressed the need for involvement of other health professionals in the work of the congress.



(BIH) Snaga (power) Association was presented by its President Mrs. Alma Stefanišin Serdarević and by Mrs. Amra Hasic. (CRO) Remisija (remission) President Nenad Horvat addressed the attendees, and Petra Zajc spoke in the name of "Društvo Revmatikov Slovenije" (SLO). Introduction of neighbouring countries' associations was warmly welcomed by the audience, which was later shown in the evaluation forms.



Rheumatologists and patients High-Sed together in support to all the patients.



Prof. Dr. Nemanja Damjanov, former President and Prof. Dr. Milan Petronijević, his successor in a casual conversation



We exercised this year too



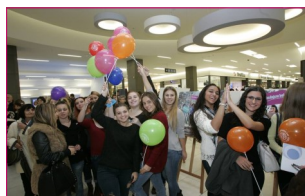
Observing World Arthritis Day

Belgrade

October 12th is the World Arthritis Day. We organized activities in several towns throughout Serbia with the idea to draw attention to the problems of people with rheumatoid arthritis. This year's slogan was "It's In Your Hands – Take Action".



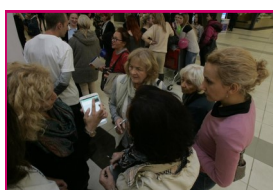
ARS volunteers informed audience about ARS and its activities.



Students from Medical School "Beograd" and their teacher, professor Dr. Gordana Janjić, also the president of ARS at the Military Medical Academy (MMA), supported the event.



Joint photos of rheumatologists and patients, taken during the RAS/ARS Congress in 2015, were exhibited on that day in Merkator Shopping Mall.



Smart phone application "RA Helper" promotion



Everyone wanted to hear an extra advice from rheumatologists at the Institute of Rheumatology.



They High-5ed for patients:
1. RAS President Prof. Dr. Petronijević and ARS President
2. Prof. Dr. Damjanov and Dr. Lapčević



Reporters from several TV and radio stations interviewed ARS President, Prim. Dr. Mirjana Lapčević, Prof. Dr. Nemanja Damjanov, Institute of Rheumatology Director, and RAS President Prof. Dr. Milan Petronijević.



In Belgrade, we set up a stand in Merkator Shopping Mall, at which public was informed about rheumatic diseases and ARS activities. The information were provided by rheumatologists from the Institute of Rheumatology in Belgrade. Prof. Dr. Milan Petronijević, MMA rheumatologist and RAS President, Prof. Dr. Nemanja Damjanov, Institute of Rheumatology Director, ex RAS President and ex EULAR General Secretary also took part in the event. On the occasion, joint photos of patients and rheumatologists, taken at the RAS/ARS Congress, were exhibited with the aim to display requisite for good cooperation and communication between rheumatologists and patients. Smart phone app "RA Helper" was also promoted. Its purpose is to follow patients' health and prevent disease development. Several TV stations broadcasted the event through the interviews with the rheumatologists and the ARS President.

Niš –town in the southern part of Serbia

In Niš, the World Arthritis Day was observed at Kalče Shopping Mall. Present rheumatologists from Niška Banja Institute and Niš Medical Centre were providing advice to interested people. More light on the importance of the event, organized by the ARS Niš, was cast by Milorad Stošić, National Assembly Deputy, and Žarko Ranković, City Alderman. In addition, the audience could hear more information about the ARS Niš branch office. The event was attended by Prof. Dr. Jelena Vojinović, rheumatologist pediatrician, Docent Dr. Bojana Stamenković, young volunteers from high schools and medical technicians. The whole event was covered in news by several TV stations.



Dr. Bojana Stamenković, rheumatologist from Niška Banja Institute, Milorad Stošić, National Assembly Deputy, and Žarko Ranković, City Alderman, greeted the audience.



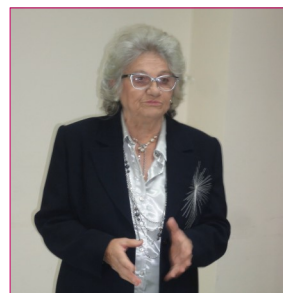
ARS Niš board members, Prof. Dr. Mirjana Apostolović, Tamara Mladenović, Aleksandra Matić, Đorđe Stanić together with Prof. Dr. Jelena Vojinović, reumatologist pediatrician from Clinical Centre of Niš, Docent Dr. Bojana Stamenković, rheumatologist from Niška Banja Institute, medical technicians and city politicians joined the World Arthritis Day celebration.

Novi Sad –town in the northern part of Serbia

The World Arthritis Day was observed at Jodna Banja, Dedicated Rheumatic Diseases Hospital in Novi Sad. Dr. Snežana Stojković gave a lecture on diet for arthritis patients in a very interesting and understandable manner. Olga Vasić, ARS Novi Sad President, informed attendees on fibromyalgia, still largely unknown disease, and the “Register Me” action. Novi Sad poet Spasenija Sladojev Cana gave a special note to the event by emotionally reciting her poems to the numerous visitors. ARS Zrenjanin members attended the event too. Local TV Station KANAL 9 made a proper TV programme on the occasion.



ARS Novi Sad Branch Office and ARS Zrenjanin Offshoot jointly celebrating the World Arthritis Day.



The participants enjoyed the poems of Mrs. Spasenija Sladojev Cana, a poet from Novi Sad.



The participants carefully listening to the lectures.



Novi Sad activists high 5 in support to the patients with rheumatic diseases. Mrs. Ljiljana Milanović (on the right) kept the records of ARS activities by taking photos.



Rheumatologists of Jodna Banja, Dedicated Rheumatic Disease Hospital, support the patients at all times—Dr. Snežana Stojkov, rheumatologist, and Olga Vasić, ARS Novi Sad President.

Osteoporosis Call Centre

This project began in May 2015 with the period set to one year. Dr. Gordana Janjic is in charge of the Project, with the task to spend two hours behind the line, Monday to Friday.

Dr. Janjic answers to the questions related to the treatment and prevention of osteoporosis. The Project covered the production of business cards with details on Information Centre. They were handed out to osteoporosis patients or people at risk of getting osteoporosis at ARS meetings or doctors' offices.

This project is financially supported by the pharmaceutical company Glaxo Smith Kline.

Support to Patients

The Project, funded by pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and AbbVie, is being implemented at the Institute of Rheumatology. Marija Kosanović is responsible for this project that will last until March 2016.

The Project objectives are: helping patients treated with biologic drugs, providing information and counseling (within the limits of an Assistant's responsibilities), encouraging patients to regularly and properly apply prescribed treatment, reminding patients to show up at medical appointments with required documents and questions or doubts that patients might have in relation to biological treatment, facilitating communication between patients and health personnel.

For the nine months in 2015, patients' main concerns were health changes and their scheduled appointment too far to wait for. Even though the patients didn't show expected interest in the Project, it enabled ARS to promptly react in all emergencies, and to gain insight into the details of the treatments and monitoring of the disease progression.

At the patients' dissatisfaction with suspension of biological therapy for those patients who had been in remission for more than a year, thanks to this Project the ARS was

able to immediately react and organize two meetings with the help of rheumatologists from the Institute of Rheumatology. The patients could hear more about the procedure of therapy assignment, suspension of the therapy, and express their opinion and dissatisfaction.

Along the Project we realized the patients had been changing therapies at their own will. We took initiative to regularly provide education for the patients. Owing to the goodwill of the Director Prof. Dr. Nemanja Damjanov, and rheumatologists at the Inst. of Rheumatology, the first lecture in the line of bi-weekly lectures was held.

The Project also covered business card production. With project information and BT diary printed on we encouraged patients to continue taking BT and keep the records of it.

Those patients who have used the Assistant's services are greatly satisfied and grateful to ARS for leading the Project.

INFORMATIVNI CENTAR ZA OSTEOPOROZU

Pozovite **060 33 44 651**

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Udruženje obolelih od
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 **PODRŠKA
PACIJENTIMA**

Marija Kosanović
060 33 44 692

Radno vreme:
Institut za reumatologiju pon - pet
Resavska 69, amb. za klinička merenja 8-12h



Marija Kosanović speaking with the patients and distributing the ARS brochures when necessary



The Assistant's work was made easier thanks to nurses Marina Kenjić, Ana Teofilović, Mirjana Rajaković and Ljiljana Vračar, the employees at the Early Arthritis Clinic, part of the Institute of Rheumatology. They helped in every counseling.

Psycho-social support

The workshop of psycho-social support have been regularly taking place in Belgrade once a week in the ORS premises, during the year 2015. Three psychologists and one psychotherapist have performed the group therapy with some ORS members.

Such way of group therapy is improving the participants quality of life.

Some of the participants of the group from

2014 gave testimony about the results of the mentioned workshop. "I am more relaxed, less nervous and less aggressive", also, "I take the problems more easily and I am falling asleep much better" and, "Together with the group I am not feeling alone" - these being the statements from the participants of this group.



Self-Management Course

In 2014, Agora funded the training for trainers of the self-management course covering three ARS members. Having completed the training, the new trainers were required to hold two seminars each year. In 2015, from Jul 9th to Aug 13th and from Nov 5th to Dec 10th Živan Pavlović and Marija Kosanović held two courses. The courses lasted six weeks each and covered the topics of rheumatoid arthritis treatment, physical exercise, nutrition, pain management, overcoming problems, alternative methods of treatment, etc. Altogether 18 persons applied and 12 completed the training. Final evaluation showed that participants, who had completed the course, were very pleased with what they had heard and learned. In their view, the course had opened "new ways of thinking" and it was "interesting, didactic", "engaging, efficient, helpful and useful".

The participants expressed desire for similar gatherings in the future, so the trainers organized the New Year's three-hour event. They spent it in a good humor and pleasant conversation.



The Self-Management course participants enjoyed the New Year's gathering.



Živan Pavlović demonstrates, in a game, how to get stress release.



Posing at the end of the 2nd course.

Lectures—Head Office

Four lectures were given this year in the Head Office:

- Comorbidity in Rheumatic Diseases and Its Impact, Dr. Sladjana Živojinović
- Surgical Treatment of Rheumatic Diseases in Joints, Docent Dr. Sci. Zoran Baščarević
- The Assessment of Severity of Inflammatory Rheumatic Diseases, Assistant Dr. Sci. Med. Predrag Ostojic
- Proper BT Application – Patients' Rights and Obligations, Mr. Sci. Med. Dr. Branko Barac



Some of the lectures required an extra seat



Participants were interested in joining discussions after lectures

Working Out at ARS

Qigong

Qigong is offered to ARS members at discount prices for fourth year in a row. This has been enabled owing to the support of instructor, Saša Balanesković, and the Institute of Rheumatology where the qigong exercises take place. In summertime, qigong is held outdoor, in Kalemegdan Park. All participants reported enjoying a great pleasure.



Yoga

Another ARS workout is Yoga lessons, lead by Milan Sudžuk. It started in December and already caught the attention of many members.

Qigong and Yoga lessons are open for the Institute of Rheumatology employees, which in addition strengthens and improves relations between health professionals and patients.



Thanks to the Institute of Rheumatology our members have a place to practice Yoga

Excursions

In 2015, two excursions were organized, to Ždrelo Hot Spring Resort in March and to Vrdnik Hot Spring Resort in May. ARS members from Belgrade and Kragujevac enjoyed together the visit to Ždrelo, whilst members from Belgrade and Novi Sad attended the visit to Vrdnik.

Excursion to Ždrelo

Gathering point for ARS Kragujevac and Belgrade was Gornjak Monastery. Having paid the visit to the Monastery, the group left for Ždrelo Hot Spring Resort. Some of the group members took a bath in the healing waters, whilst others hung out in the hotel lounge. After a lunch, the participants parted satisfied.



ARS Members from Belgrade and Kragujevac hanging out and having fun.



Everyone enjoyed the trip greatly and expressed desire for another round of excursions in the future

Excursion to Vrdnik

Excursion to Vrdnik was organized in the same manner as the one to Ždrelo. Focal point was Krušedol Monastery where the group gathering was welcomed by a guide, who told the story of the Monastery. After the monastery, the group visited Ravanica and Grgeteg Monasteries after which they headed to Vrdnik Hot Spring Resort. Part of the group decided to have a bath, while the others took a walk and enjoyed the beautiful nature. Having the lunch together they parted until another joint event in the future.



ARS Novi Sad members always ready for having fun together. On the right side of the picture is Biserka Gajicki, an ARS member who, unfortunately, passed away at the end of the last year. Only bright memories will remain after her. ARS is grateful for having the opportunity to have had her as a member.



ARS visiting the Monastery



Members from Belgrade meet the ones from Novi Sad.



Short break after a walk



ARS MMA enjoyed the excursion as well.

Activities in Branch Offices

ARS Kragujevac (ARS branch office in the town Kragujevac)

Apart from being active in all Head Office activities and attending excursion to Ždrelo, ARS Kragujevac organized lectures on following topics:

- Treatment that Meets the Objective, lecturer: Prim. Dr Mirjana Lapčević; patients' questions answered by: Dr. Sci. Med. Sandra Živanović
- Early RA Diagnosis, Course of the Disease and Therapy, Dr Sci. Med. Sandre Živanović;
- Fibromyalgia, Jasmina Simić

ARS Kragujevac President, Tanja Đurđević, kept regular communication with other patients' associations and local media all year long.



A member of ARS Kragujevac, Jasmina Simić, started a support group for fibromyalgia patients that will operate within ARS. She designed leaflets by herself, had them printed out (funded by ARS) and initiated communication with rheumatologists to spread the word about the group. Ms Simić collected and translated documentation for application to the European Network of Fibromyalgia Associations (ENFA).



Dr Sandra Živanović, taking active part in all the lectures



Signing petition for BT referent centre at Clinical Centre in Kragujevac.

ARS Niš (ARS branch office in the town Niš)

ARS Niš members got more information on their disease in lectures on the following topics:

- Biological Therapy in Rheumatic Diseases – Doc. Sci. Med. Dr Sonja Stojanović
- Rheumatic Diseases and the Treatment – Prof. Dr Aleksandra Stanković; this lecture was held in cooperation with the movement of “The Old Age.”
- Potential Side Effects of Anti-Rheumatic Drugs – Assis. Dr Sci. Med. Jovan Nedović
- Rheumatic Disease Patients' Quality of Life – Dr Sci. Med. Jelena Jovanović

Members of the ARS Niš took part in the activities organized by the Head Office – they attended the lectures in Belgrade and regional meetings. Aleksandra Matić, as an ARS representative, attended the EULAR Congress in Rome and the Agora Conference in Crete.

All ARS Niš activities are supported by rheumatologists from Niska Banja and the Clinical Center of Niš.



Prof. Dr Mirjana Apostolović, President of the branch office, Aleksandra Matić and Tamara Mladenović ensure that ARS Niš is always efficient



ARS Niš youth posing at the RAS/ARS Congress.

Novi Sad (ARS branch office in the town Novi Sad)

ARS Novi Sad showed a good example of teamwork in this year too. In joint effort, they provided public transportation tickets at discount prices, were granted permission to use a cabin at the famous Novi Sad “Štrand” beach, thanks to the efforts of activists. During duty hours at Jodna Banja, Dedicated Rheumatic Diseases Hospital, ARS members could book an appointment with a doctor.

The ARS Novi Sad activists took part in all activities of the Head Office. They worked out in 2015 as well. Those who exercised Tai Chi expressed satisfaction with it and used every opportunity to promote it.



ARS Novi Sad exercising Qigong.



Lively discussion during “Relations Between Health Professionals and Patients” workshop.



Novi Sad ARS members and rheumatologists together with Zrenjanin ARS members posing at the RAS/ARS Congress.

ARS Novi Sad Branch and ARS Zrenjanin Offshoot saw lectures on the following topics:

- Specific Recommendations to and Team Approach in the Treatment of RA Patients, Prim. Dr Biljana Erdeljan in Novi Sad
- Comorbidity in Rheumatic Diseases, Dr Stojanović Subin Sofija; Specific Recommendations to and Team Approach in the Treatment of RA Patients, Prim. Dr. Biljana Erdeljan in Zrenjanin
- RA Patient Nutrition and Its Significance, Dr Snežana Stojković, The voice of the diseased:
Everything Hurts, Do I Have Fibromyalgia?, Olga Vasić from ARS
A Register for Better Treatment, Olga Vasić from ARS, in Novi Sad
- Evaluation of Severity of Inflammatory Rheumatic Diseases, Prim. Dr Biljana Erdeljan; RA HELPER, Borislava Krstić, in Novi Sad



Zrenjanin ARS members taking interest in lectures



Prim. Dr. Biljana Erdeljan from Jodna Banja and Dr. Sofija Subin Stojanović from General Hospital in Zrenjanin always come to the ARS invitation and take part in our activities.

Activities in Branch Offices

ARS Užice (ARS branch office in the town Užice)

ARS Užice members participated in some of the activities of the Head Office, and they had the lecture on the following topic organized:

- Non-Steroid Anti-Inflammatory Drugs and the Misuse, Dr Vesna Ristanović, Internal Medicine Specialist



ARS Užice members participated in RAS/ARS Congress.

ARS MMA (ARS branch office in the city Belgrade)

ARS MMA actively cooperated with “Beograd” Medical School throughout the year. Dr Gordana Janjić, the president of MMA branch organized joint workshops for ARS members and the students of this school on healthy lifestyles and osteoporosis. It was an excellent opportunity for the medical school students to get closer to patients and to better prepare for their future profession, and for ARS members to learn and to also enjoy the company of young people. In cooperation with the medical school, they had Decoupage workshop organized for the students and ARS members.

On the World Autoimmune Arthritis Day ARS MMA organized charity event with students reciting, playing instruments, acting and dancing.

Dr Gordana Janjic, the president of the branch, is in charged for the "Osteoporosis Call Center."



Participants of the Decoupage Workshop, organized by the ARS VMA, enjoyed making New Year's decorations.



Dr. Gordana Janjić gave few lectures on osteoporosis and healthy lifestyle.



Students from “Beograd” Medical School joined ARS MMA in workshop and the event organized on the World Autoimmune Arthritis Day.

Regional Meetings

Balkan Summit for Rheumatic Disease Patients

Balkan Summit for Rheumatic Disease Patients was held on April 21 and 22, 2015 in Belgrade.

Main covered topics were: tuberculosis in patients taking BT, comorbidities, the role of a register in patient treatment. Second day was dedicated to the lecture on EU funds and two workshops on communication between doctors and patients, and the role of a health professional in treatment with BT.



More than 70 participants were content with what they have heard at the Balkan Summit.

Press conference was held at the end, and it made a positive impact.

General impression was that there is need for more meetings of this kind with more participants.

The event was financially supported by Pfizer.



Lecturers ready for the Summit: Assistant Dr. Sci. Med. Predrag Ostojić, Docent Dr. Sci. Med. Goran Stevanović, Prof. Dr. Nemanja Damjanov and Dr. Goran Radunović



Discussion was dynamic



Balkan Summit participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia taking a walk after work.

Regional Meetings

Adria IMID Patient Forum



Workshop discussions were stimulating.



Joint picture for loving memories.

Adria IMID Patient forum was held on May 9th, 2015 in Belgrade. It gathered people suffering from rheumatic diseases, psoriasis and ulcerative colitis from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia. Projects that had been initiated at the IMID meetings, "IBID School" in Croatia and "Support to Patients" in Serbia, were presented at the beginning of the Forum.

After introductory session, the workshop "Public Advocacy" started with involvement of all the Forum participants. The workshop provided more information on how to set up a campaign and successfully present it to the public and politicians.

Plenty of useful information spread around helped participants come up with many new ideas. Everyone parted feeling satisfaction with the work done.

The event was sponsored by the company AbbVie.

XVII Annual Congress of Croatian Society for Rheumatology of Croatian Medical Association

The Congress was held on October 15 to 18, 2015 in Poreč.

Congress participants were:

- Doctors rheumatologists, physiatrists, immunologists, orthopedists
- Association of Nurses, Technicians and Physical Therapists in Rheumatology and Rehabilitation, and
- Representatives of the Association of the Croatian Rheumatology Association's Patients, and representatives of the Remission

Doctor meeting contained many professional and scientific lectures on osteoarthritis, which resulted in given recommendations and guidelines for its treatment, paraneoplastic syndrome in rheumatology, inflammatory arthritis.

Lectures at the XXVI Education of Association of Nurses, Technicians and Physical Therapists in Rheumatology and Rehabilitation covered the topics on cooperation with patients, side effects of drugs resulting from patients' disagreement.

Several patients, talking about experience with the treatment of inflammatory arthritis, clearly pointed out good cooperation between patients and doctors and other health professionals that improves the quality of treatment and quality of life. They also reported on side effects of drugs.

"Rheumatlon" or the race for arthritis was held for the second time. Its message shows that the disease is not a setback for sports – it is important to be active. General idea is to raise public awareness of the importance of rheumatic diseases. Doctors, nurses/technicians, physiotherapists and patients ran together for joint the cause.

Full report on the conference can be found at www.ors.rs (only in Serbian).



Congress participants—patient associations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia.



Preparation for "Rheumatlon", patients and rheumatologists ran together in order to raise awareness about RA.

Regional Meetings

Regional Meeting of Patients with Chronic Inflammatory Rheumatic Diseases

Regional meeting of patients with chronic inflammatory rheumatic diseases was held on November 3rd 2015 in Sarajevo.

The main topic of the Meeting was availability of biological therapies. Prof. Dr Mevludin Mekić, UCC of Sarajevo, Mr. Sci. Dr Ljubinka Božić Majstorović, Clinical Centre of the Republic of Serbia, Prof. Dr Matija Tomšić, UCC of Ljubljana and others addressed the subject at the press conference and during the lecture.

The Meeting ended with practical lecture to patients about optimal therapy, diet and the quality of the lifestyle.



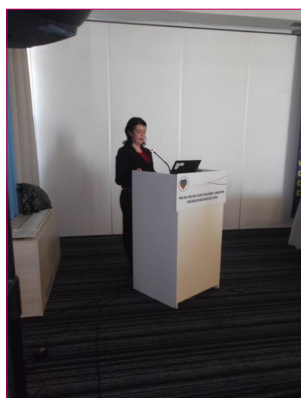
Participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia.



Meeting attracted many participants.



Number of patients taking BT on the territory of ex Yugoslavia, late in 2015.



Mirela Haračić, the President of Association of Patients with Rheumatic Diseases "Snaga" of Tuzla county and Alma Stefanišin Serdarević were both responsible for the well organized event.

International Activities

EULAR Annual European PARE Conference

XVIII EULAR Annual European PARE Conference was held on April 24 to 26, 2015 in Dublin, Ireland. Main Conference subject was a health system dedicated to a patient “Taking the Control”.

Eight workshops were held:

- Dissemination of the EULAR recommendations
- Skills training – How to chair a meeting or moderate a session successfully
- The role of organisations in the development of health apps and e-health services for people with RMDs
- Youth Workshop-Setting up a PARE network for the young
- Campaigning for patient choice
- The role of patients in patient centred care and what organisations can do to help
- What steps can national organisations take to help people with RMDs self manage?
- Youth Workshop - PARE strategy for the young.



EULAR conferences are important to ARS because of the many new information and advice we always get in formal programme as well as in informal communication.

Full report from the conference is available on www.ors.rs (only in Serbian).

Agora's Fourth Conference

AGORA's Fourth Conference was held in Heraklion, Crete on 25 and 26 of September 2015. Its main subject “Patient's Rights to Better Treatment” was covered through lectures, presentations and workshops. The meeting of the General Assembly was first on agenda. Official programme started with presentation of a research done among Agora members, through the project “Partners in Treatment”.

The first part of the Conference covered biosimilar medicines, their application and role of patients in the medicine choice. The importance of improvement in communication between patients and doctors was also pointed out. Every decision made on treatment of patients should be mutually brought, with complete trust on both sides.

Another subject was pharmacoeconomics. Plenty was said on the subjects of mental relaxation, meditation and control of emotions, stress reduction which altogether reduce disease progression and improve pain management. A dinner organized in a traditional tavern of a beautiful town of Ayios Nikolas marked the end of the Conference. All the participants spent the evening in joint discussion and socialising.

Full report from the Conference is available on: www.ors.rs (only in Serbian).



Seeing dear friends is always a pleasure. Participants of the Agora's Fourth Conference.



Lectures were educational and informative

International Activities

EULAR Congress

XVI EULAR Congress was held in Italy from June 10 to 13, 2015. This year, thanks to the substantial financial support of pharmaceutical companies Roche and Pfizer, Prim. Dr Mirjana Lapčević, the ARS President and Aleksandra Matić, the ARS member, could attend the Congress.

The programme was divided into several parts:

- Building sustainable relationships between patients and researchers
- Measuring success-how to evaluate the impact of your campaign
- Championing work
- Lost in the system-how to use innovative care to bring health services back to the patient
- Who cares? Primary care focus
- What is new? Latest advances in treatment and management
- Youth in action

The meeting of PARE Standing Committee was held as well, ongoing issues were being discussed and problems solved.

PARE Representatives presented posters of respective organizations and promoted activities and campaigns of their national organizations.

The story that had been awarded with Stene Award in 2015. was introduced. The activities of countries, PARE members, were demonstrated through abstracts.

ARS Representatives had the opportunity to share experiences and get useful information at the lectures and in formal conversations.

Full report from the conference is available on www.ors.rs (only in Serbian).



Association of Rheumatic Diseases Patients of the Republic of Serbia (ARS)

Acknowledgement

Thank you all for being with us and helping us to achieve great results in 2015.

Thank you:

- Rheumatology Institute in Belgrade,
- Jodna Banja, Dedicated Rheumatic Diseases Hospital in Novi Sad
- Niška Banja Institute in Niška Banja
- General Hospital in Zrenjanin
- Medical institutes Kragujevac

Our gratitude goes to all associates and friends abroad as well:

- European League Against Rheumatism
- Agora.

We are grateful to everyone who financially supported ARS activities in 2015:

- Pfizer
- Abbvie
- Roche
- MSD
- Glaxo Smith Kline

- Hemofarm
- BGP
- Pharmanova

Thank you all associates, volunteers and activists.

Together with all of you the ARS became more successful, more important and more influential.

**PRIM. DR MIRJANA
LAPČEVIĆ
ARS PRESIDENT**

Report made by
Marija Kosanović

Translation in English
provided by
Jasmina Simić

Email:
mkosanovic@ors.rs

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