

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE

University of Kentucky Launches Clinical Outcomes-based Educational Initiative to Reinforce Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) Standards of Care

Program to address physician gaps in managing rheumatic conditions and improve patient care and outcomes

NEW YORK CITY – Oct. 28, 2008 – The [University of Kentucky Pharmacy and Medicine Continuing Education Office \(UKPMCE\)](#) announced today the launch of the [Rheumatoid Arthritis Educational Challenge \(RAEC\)](#), which will address deficits in the treatment of rheumatic diseases, particularly rheumatoid arthritis (RA). The multi-interventional, integrated series of educational activities are designed to help rheumatologists and related physicians that treat RA to apply the latest evidence-based standards of care to maximize outcomes for patients with RA.

“The RAEC takes a unique perspective on influencing appropriate practice behavior of physicians to overcome barriers that prevent them from managing RA effectively,” said Philip J. Mease, M.D., Chief of Rheumatology Research at Swedish Medical Center and Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of Washington in Seattle. “The initiative will assess specific provider and patient measures that must be addressed for improvements in outcomes to occur. The goal is to combine early diagnosis and treatment practices with accurate assessment of disease status and treatment response through various clinical measures, imaging techniques and biomarkers to advance clinical outcomes and chance of remission.”

Cost drivers include delayed diagnosis and treatment of RA with TNF α antagonists, which have been shown to reduce disease activity and slow or stop joint destruction. Additionally, patients diagnosed with early RA often are not treated within an appropriate time, resulting in early structural joint damage and loss of function. Compounding the problem is that physicians face a wide array of options, complicating the determination of the ideal therapeutic strategy for their patients.

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To enable physicians to meet these challenges, UKPMCE is overseeing the RAEC program to help them:

- Understand the benefits of an aggressive treatment-to-target strategy in the early management of RA
- Apply appropriate, integrated referral and care pathways for multidiscipline management of patients with RA and comorbid conditions, including atypical cases
- Utilize the risk/benefit profiles and appropriate administration of biological / TNF α antagonist therapies in the management of RA patients
- Learn appropriate patient-physician communication skills for discussing the rationale, benefits and risks of biological / TNF α antagonist therapies in RA

Added Mease, "The challenge is to enable rheumatologists to move beyond knowing and understanding standards of care and treatment guidelines into implementing and practicing those standards. The educational interventions of this initiative are designed to do just that -- to assist practitioners in self-assessing and to empower them to close their own assessed practice gaps. In addition, the program will strengthen rheumatologists' patient-physician communications, disease and treatment assessment, and clinical decision-making skills in a manner that enhances patient care and outcomes."

Participants in the RAEC activity may qualify for CME credits through the University of Kentucky College of Medicine. The program is supported by an educational grant from [Amgen, Inc.](#) and [Wyeth Pharmaceuticals](#). For more information or to register, visit <http://www.cecentral.com/raec> or call (908) 253-9001.

About the University of Kentucky Pharmacy and Medicine Continuing Education Office

In accordance with the University of Kentucky's education, research, and service missions, the Pharmacy and Medicine Continuing Education program delivers quality educational activities responsive to advances in medicine, pharmacotherapy, and patient care with an emphasis on improving patient and population health in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The program offers pharmacists, physicians, and other healthcare professionals worldwide an opportunity to maintain and enhance their professional competencies in medicine and medication use through interactive live activities and enduring materials. For more information, please visit <http://www.ukyce.com/>

About RAEC

Rheumatoid Arthritis Educational Challenge (RAEC) is a multi-interventional, integrated series of CME-accredited educational activities developed to overcome physician barriers related to their rheumatoid arthritis patients' outcomes.

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The core curriculum will focus on improving the knowledge and behavior of healthcare providers in the area of rheumatoid arthritis. The educational program will be presented to participants in various modules containing interventions ranging from a live meeting workshop series to mobile learning activities and video satellite broadcasts.