

Rheumatology and COVID-19

Dear Members,

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are keen to reiterate current advice regarding management of our patients. Many of our patients are immunosuppressed and should be considered high risk. Nonetheless, all patients should continue to take their medication unless directed otherwise by their rheumatologist. Discontinuation of drug therapy would likely lead to disease reactivation, itself a risk for infection, and it is currently unknown how long the pandemic will last. Our patients need to continue to be monitored carefully. The feasibility of providing remote consultations where appropriate, to reduce the need for attendance at clinics should be considered. All outpatient services should however, be kept in place. We need to remain available to our patients for assessment, monitoring and intervention when necessary.

If patients develop symptoms of any infection, including COVID-19, in consultation with their rheumatology team immunosuppressive therapy should be paused for the duration of the infection until they feel well.

The ISR advocates strongly for continuation of rheumatology service delivery in the safest manner achievable.

Further very useful information is available at <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/>