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CHARITY LAUNCHES NATIONAL #SHOUTABOUTGOUT CAMPAIGN

1 in 40 in the UK are living with gout

Today (28th March, 2017), the UK Gout Society will join forces with parliamentarians, doctors and other charities to help raise awareness of gout - the most common form of inflammatory arthritis worldwide, which now affects one in 40 people in the UK.¹

Speaking at a parliamentary event in the House of Commons later today,* Jim Shannon, MP for Strangford (Northern Ireland) and DUP Spokesperson for Health, will remark: “People with gout have been caricatured and laughed at throughout the centuries – but for people living with the condition it is anything but funny.”

Gout is in fact an extremely painful condition, which left untreated may lead to joint and kidney damage, permanent disability and an increased risk of death.² It is caused by crystals of uric acid being deposited in the tissues when there is too much uric acid in the bloodstream, which cannot be effectively removed from the kidneys. Gout is often associated with many other serious health conditions including obesity, kidney disease, diabetes, heart attack and stroke.² Between 1997 and 2012 the prevalence of gout in the UK rose by 64%.¹

The campaign hopes to encourage people affected by gout, their friends and family, to share their experiences of gout via social media by using the hashtag **#shoutaboutgout**. The UK Gout Society hopes that this will help to dispel some of the myths surrounding the disorder e.g., that it is entirely self-inflicted and not a serious problem; and one that only affects older wealthy men who eat rich foods and drink too much alcohol.

“Gout can occur any time after puberty in men but seldom before the menopause in women. Sometimes there is a family history of the disorder,” says George Nuki, Emeritus Professor of Rheumatology, University of Edinburgh, and trustee of the UK Gout Society.

“While modifying diet and lifestyle may help, gout can only be effectively treated and prevented by long-term treatment with prescription medications that lower the level of uric acid in the blood.

Unfortunately, we know that prescription, monitoring and adherence to these ‘potentially curative’ medications continues to remain a significant problem,” he adds.

According to recent research, less than one in five people with gout are prescribed uric acid lowering therapy within six months of diagnosis - and only a quarter are still receiving treatment a year after being diagnosed.¹

“It is vital that we all work together to raise awareness of gout – together with other musculoskeletal conditions - because they are seriously undertreated and greatly misunderstood,” adds Jim Shannon MP.

Established in 2002, the UK Gout Society is the only charity in the UK solely dedicated to raising awareness of gout and providing basic support and information. The charity also plans to undertake educational work among health professionals and health commissioners later in 2017.

To help support the charity and generate vital funds, become a Friend of the UK Gout Society, by visiting the ‘Support Us’ page at www.ukgoutsociety.org

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Note to editors:

What is gout?

Gout is a metabolic and musculoskeletal disorder that causes acute, intermittent and painful attacks of arthritis in the joints of the foot, knee, ankle, hand and wrist - especially the big toe. It results from an excess of uric acid in the blood and tissues of the body, which if present for long enough, can form into needle-like crystals which can inflame your joints and cause severe pain and swelling. Most people with gout have high levels of uric acid in their body because it hasn’t been efficiently removed by the kidneys and washed out in the urine.

Too much uric acid can also be caused by a diet rich in purines (a constituent of meat, shellfish and many foods), alcohol (especially beer), crash dieting, stress, prolonged illness, injury, or by certain medicines e.g. diuretics (water tablets) and aspirin. Other diseases associated with gout include obesity, diabetes, hypertension (high blood pressure), heart attacks, angina, stroke, peripheral vascular disease (poor circulation in the limbs - claudication), hyperlipidaemia (high levels of cholesterol and other fats in the blood), psoriasis (a chronic skin condition) and kidney disease.
www.ukgoutsociety.org

What are musculoskeletal disorders?

Musculoskeletal disorders are injuries or pain in the body's joints, ligaments, muscles, nerves, tendons, and structures that support limbs, neck and back. They are degenerative diseases and inflammatory conditions that cause pain and impair normal activities. Currently, musculoskeletal

conditions are the greatest cause of disability (as measured by years lived with disability) in the UK.³
www.arma.uk.net

References:

1. Kuo CF, Grainge MJ, Mallen C, Zhang W, Doherty M. *Rising burden of gout in the UK but continuing suboptimal management: a nationwide population study*. Ann Rheum Dis. 2015 Apr;74(4):661-7.
2. British Society for Rheumatology and British Health Professionals in Rheumatology Guideline for the Management of Gout. Draft Update:
http://www.rheumatology.org.uk/resources/guidelines/proposed_guidelines_open_consultation.aspx
3. Accessed at: [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(13\)60355-4/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(13)60355-4/fulltext)

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