

# RICKETY JOINTS

Volume 2, Issue 1, March 2004

Welcome to the latest edition of *rickety joints*, the NSW Young Adults with Arthritis Newsletter. Copies of all newsletters are available on the website at <http://yawa.arthritisnsw.org.au/newsletter.html>. If you have any suggestions or comments, please email them to [yawa@arthritisnsw.org.au](mailto:yawa@arthritisnsw.org.au).

## *Comments from the Committee*

Hi everyone. We hope you all enjoy this edition of *rickety joints*.

Where does the time go? We are already into the third month of 2004 and everywhere you look there are Easter Egg displays. Before we know it Christmas will be here again.

Well summer is officially over and there is a definite nip in the air of a morning and night. Hopefully we will still have a few more warm days. Lets just hope that the high humidity has finally left us. I don't know about you but I hate that hot and humid weather. Apart from making it harder to sleep, all the joints tend to stiffen up and swell.

As we mentioned last time, a number of our members have recently had joint replacements or other arthritis related surgeries. We are pleased to report that all came through these operations with no more scars than necessary and they are all progressing well.

Our monthly meetings have begun again. As was the case last year, these will be held from 10:30am on the first Saturday of each month at the Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club in West Ryde. Our thanks go out to the club for their continued support and supply of a meeting venue free of charge.

If anyone has any suggestions for trips or outings or anything involving the group, please let us know.

Best wishes to all,  
NSW YAWA Committee Members

## *Treatment Updates And PBAC Decisions*

As we have reported previously, two of the newer "Biologic" style DMARDs have been approved for conditional listing on the Australian Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). These are Enbrel and Remicade. Patients wishing to access these medications under the PBS must meet strict criteria. Initial approval (if granted) is given for 16 weeks supply and the patient must show an adequate response to the treatment to continue receiving it beyond 16 weeks.

Enbrel and Remicade are both types of TNF-a inhibitors. TNF-a (or Tumor Necrosis Factor alpha) is a naturally occurring substance in the bodies and is part of the normal inflammatory response. In the

inflammatory types of arthritis, the TNF-a tends to be over produced. These medications work by inhibiting the production of TNF-a and there-by reducing the amount of inflammation in the joints and the associated pain, stiffness and potential joint damage.

Last year, a third TNF-a medication was released for use in the USA. This medication is sold under the brand name "Humira" and its technical name is Adalimumab. Unlike Enbrel and Remicade, Humira is totally synthetic. It is administered via once a fortnight sub-cutaneous injections that are usually done by the patient (or their carer).

Humira has now been approved for use in Australia to treat adult patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis but has not yet been listed on the PBS. An application to have Humira listed on the PBS was considered by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) in December 2003. Their recommendation was that Humira should gain approval for conditional listing with the same approval criteria as attached to Enbrel. Their recommendation was made on the basis of cost-minimisation against Enbrel as the comparative effective dosages are 40mg per fortnight for Humira and 25mg twice weekly for Enbrel. There is still a number of stages that Humira needs to pass before it can be listed and there is no indication of when a possibly listing may occur.

In the mean time, clinical trials of Humira are currently under way or about to begin in a number of locations around Australia. Patients wishing to participate in these trials will need to be put forward by their rheumatologist. They will also need to meet strict criteria including:

- Moderate to Severe Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Unsatisfactory Response or Intolerance to previous DMARDS (Triple Therapy)
- ACR Criteria for at least 3 months present
- No treatment with approved biologics within the past 2 months
- No history of any uncontrolled medical condition

If you require any additional information on the Humira trials or its potential suitability as a treatment option for you, please speak to your rheumatologist.

## *Feature Article - Sure-Fire Cures for Arthritis*

Who said there was no cure for arthritis? And why do the pharmaceutical companies insist on developing expensive medications that only slow the disease progression? Obviously the researchers and developers in these companies are not speaking to the right people. Anyone with arthritis can tell them that you just have to mention you have arthritis to your friends, relatives, neighbours and even perfect strangers and you will be given any number of sure-fire cures.

Now the first thing to remember is that we are all too young to have arthritis and there are plenty of people out there willing to remind us of this when ever we forget. Obviously any aches you have are either just in your mind or due to "growing pains" (oh please let me stop growing then!). But don't worry, once you pass the point of being considered too young, you can look forward to being told that "everyone gets a touch of arthritis as they get older" so it's nothing to worry about.

If you manage to convince whomever you are speaking to that you really do have arthritis, they will be more than happy to share their own personal experiences or those of their best friend's cousin three times removed. And you can be assured that they will have at least one guaranteed remedy or cure for you to try. Plus you will no longer have to waste your money on regular doctors visits and expensive medications that push you over the PBS Safety Net threshold before the end of winter.

It is possible of course that the problems you have are just due to the weather. But whatever the cause, it seems that we are all wasting our time listening to our doctors and taking all these medications that no one has ever heard of. And it is possible that the medications are actually the cause of your condition rather than an effective treatment. After all, none of the people who have discovered all these cures have ever needed to take things like this. Just take plenty of aspirin or paracetamol and you will have no more problems. Plus all those ads on the TV say that these work a treat for strong pain and we all know that what we see on TV just has to be true.

If basic analgesics don't produce the promised cure, then don't despair. Just take yourself off to the local health food store or the herbal remedy section of your local supermarket or chemist. You will be sure to find any number of potential cures. Some of the more common ones include fish oil supplements, ginger extract, green lip muscle, seaweed, shark cartilage, coral calcium, evening primrose, aloe vera "juice", glucosamine (even for the inflammatory types of arthritis), vitamin B and MSM (a sulphur compound).

What do you mean you still aren't cured? Oh well, maybe one of the dietary changes (but if you try all of them at once, you may go very hungry) or concoctions will work for you. Just avoid all hot, spicy foods, cabbage, cauliflower, spinach, broccoli, okra, potatoes, tomatoes, tea, coffee, alcohol, white sugar, yoghurt, chocolate, cocoa, anything containing caffeine and dairy products. But do eat lots of sour cherries and take daily doses (1-2 teaspoons should be enough) of Epsom salts, Gelatine, Pectin and Olive Oil. Another sure-fire cure is to daily drink 2 teaspoons of cider vinegar and 2 teaspoons of honey mixed in a cup of warm water. You should also eat 3 raisins that have been soaked in Vodka or Gin every day. I know alcohol is on the "to be avoided" list but it seems that it is okay when it has been absorbed by the raisins first.

For those of you who can't get through the day without caffeine, there is no need to despair. Although you are no longer able to drink anything containing caffeine, a good coffee enema is certain to provide that much sort after cure and caffeine fix. Unfortunately, no information was available on what sort of coffee could be used or if it could contain milk, sugar or flavourings.

Now that you have taken all your supplements, have had your coffee enema and have eaten nothing other than Epsom salts, gelatine, pectin, olive oil, apple cider vinegar with honey and 3 raisins soaked in Vodka or Gin, its time to try a few of the following devices and activities just to ensure that cure is complete and long lasting. Firstly, book yourself on a trip to the desert and lie in the hot sand (or you could try a sandpit and heat lamps) for a couple of days. Once you have done this, you will be keen to make sure all that sand is removed so go and have a nice long soak in a hot bath. You can also add red cider vinegar to the bath water for increased benefit. After your soak, apply liberal amounts of any menthol smelling rub to your joints and massage well. Once that has been absorbed, rub in some peanut oil and then spray all your joints with WD40. Now place copper and magnetic bracelets on both wrists and head off to bed (which of course has a magnetic mattress and pillow). But no sleep mind you because frequent "intimate" activity is also a sure-fire cure for all those pesky aches and pains.

Okay, hand up anyone who still isn't cured? What do you mean you can't raise your arm because your shoulder and elbow hurt? I guess these cures aren't so sure-fire after all.

### *Meeting and Special Events Update*

A copy of the minutes for all our meetings will be posted on the website by the end of the week following the meeting. This section of the site is password protected. To obtain the password, please email us at [yawa@arthritissw.org.au](mailto:yawa@arthritissw.org.au).

After a couple of months break for the Christmas and the New Year period, we have again started up our regular monthly meetings. Thanks to the generous support of the Ryde-Eastwood Leagues club, these meetings will again be held in one of their function rooms. As with last year, it is our intention to hold these meetings on the first Saturday of each month between February and November inclusive. The meetings will start at 10:30am and will last up to 2 hours. We have an open door policy on the meetings so you are free to come and go at times that suit you. Please remember that you will need to abide by club rules while on their premises and that family, friends and children are welcome to attend.

Our first meeting for 2004 was held on the 7<sup>th</sup> February. This meeting was a relaxed affair and was used as an opportunity for everyone to catch up on what has been happening since we last met.

An invitation has been issued by the NSW Arthritis Foundation for our group to participate in the Arthritis Week Launch at Parramatta Park on the 18<sup>th</sup> April. A discussion on the nature of this involvement will be held during the March meeting and details will be sent out to members and posted on the website by the end of March. If anyone has any suggestions or would like to help out on the day, please let us know.

- **Upcoming Meetings and Events**

- April:** Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> - NSW YAWA Meeting. Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club, 10:30am
- April:** Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> - Arthritis Week Launch Events, Parramatta Park
- May:** Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> - NSW YAWA Meeting. Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club, 10:30am

## *Hints and Tips*

Many people swear by aromatherapy and the use of essential oils to improve moods and relieve many ailments. Below is some information on how to use essential oils and some examples that may provide benefits to pain and inflammation.

### METHODS FOR USING ESSENTIAL OILS

- Massage - Use a carrier oil (such as sweet almond oil). 12ml sweet almond oil and 6 drops of essential oils or a blend of up to six drops in total. Increase/decrease the amount as required, keep things simple, work on a ratio of 2½ % of essential oil to 97½ % base oil.
- Bathing - Add 5 drops of oil or a 5ml blend of carrier/essential oils to running water.
- Compresses - Use 2 drops of oil in hot water. Let the oil form a film on the top of the water then place a cloth over the film, lift out, fold and use as needed.
- Oil burner: Up to 5 drops of oil in about 10mls of water.
- Use a few drops of oil on a radiator or in a saucer of water and leave in a warm part of the house. (Keep away from children and pets).
- Add a few drops of oil to the dust bag of your vacuum cleaner.

If you have aches and pains - bathing, massage and compresses would benefit you the most.

### GENERAL ARTHRITIS RELIEF

- Redness - Chamomile - Bathing, compress and massage
- Swelling - Juniper - Bathing, compress and massage
- Pain - Lavender - Bathing, compress and massage

### BLACK PEPPER

A spice that has been used for over 4,000 years, black pepper is known to dilate local blood vessels and can have benefits for muscular aches. Babies, children under the age of 13 and those following a homeopathic course of treatment should avoid this oil. Use on burner, inhalant or with a compress for best results

### CHAMOMILE

Roman Chamomile is a great oil and one that is fine for use with children. It may assist with swelling and arthritis. Use this oil in the bath, on an oil burner, on a compress and in massage - chamomile is good in all of methods of use

### JUNIPER

Distilled from the juniper berry, juniper is a blood cleansing oil. It may assist with arthritis and rheumatism. Babies, infants, children under the age of 13 and pregnant own should avoid the use of this oil.

### LAVENDER

This is one of the best known and easiest to obtain essential oils. It has a great smell and a number of uses. It may provide relief from arthritis and nausea. If too much oil is mixed and the scent is very strong, may promote a sickly feeling.

### LEMONGRASS

Used in Indian cooking. Lemongrass essential oil is a nice, sweet smelling, lemony oil that may help with muscular aches and pains. Babies, infants, children under 13 should avoid the use of this oil.

## *Giggles*

A woman and a man are involved in a car accident; it's a bad one. Both of their cars are totally demolished but amazingly neither of them are hurt. After they crawl out of their cars, the woman says, "So you're a man, that's interesting. I'm a woman. Wow, just look at our cars! There's nothing left, but fortunately we are unhurt. This must be a sign from God that we should meet and be friends and live together in peace for the rest of our days. The man replied, "I agree with you completely. "This must be a sign from God!" The woman continued, "And look at this, here's another miracle. My car is completely demolished but this bottle of wine didn't break. Surely God wants us to drink this wine and celebrate our good fortune." Then she hands the bottle to the man, The man nods his head in agreement, opens it and drinks half the bottle and then hands it back to the woman. The woman takes the bottle, immediately puts the cap back on, and hands it back to the man. The man asks, "Aren't you having any?" The woman replies, "No. I think I'll just wait for the police..."

Driving to the office this morning on the Expressway, I looked over to my left and there was a woman in a brand new Mercedes doing 120 km per hour with her face up next to her rear view mirror putting on her eyeliner! I looked away for a couple of seconds and when I looked back she was halfway over in my lane, still working on that makeup!

It scared me (I'm a man) so badly, I dropped my electric shaver, which knocked the donut out of my other hand. In all the confusion of trying to straighten out the car using my knees against the steering wheel, it knocked my cell phone away from my ear which fell into the coffee between my legs, splashed and burned Big Jim and the Twins, ruined the damn phone and DISCONNECTED AN IMPORTANT CALL!

**BLOODY WOMEN DRIVERS**

A plane is on its way to Melbourne when a blonde in Economy Class gets up and moves to the First Class section and sits down. The flight attendant watches her do this and asks to see her ticket. She then tells the blonde passenger that she paid for Economy and that she will have to go and sit in the back. The blonde replies, "I'm blonde, I'm beautiful, I'm going to Melbourne and I'm staying right here!"

The flight attendant goes into the cockpit and tells the pilot and co-pilot that there is some blonde bimbo sitting in First Class that belongs in Economy and won't move back to her seat. The co-pilot goes back to the blonde and tries to explain that because she only paid for economy she is only entitled to an economy place and she will have to leave and return to her original seat. The blonde replies, "I'm blonde, I'm beautiful, I'm going to Melbourne and I'm staying right here!"

Exasperated the co-pilot tells the pilot that it was no use and that he probably should have the police waiting when they land to arrest this blonde woman that won't listen to reason. The pilot says, "You say she's blonde? I'll handle this, I'm married to a blonde, and I speak blonde!"

He goes back to the blonde, whispers in her ear, and she says "Oh, I'm sorry- I had no idea," gets up and moves back to her seat in the economy section.

The flight attendant and co-pilot are amazed and asked him what he said to make her move without any fuss. The Pilot replied "I told her First Class isn't going to Melbourne"

## *Cooking Capers*

### CARROT AND CORIANDER SOUP – SERVES 4

#### **Ingredients**

450gm carrots (preferably young and tender ones), peeled and chopped into chunks

45ml / 3 tbsp sunflower oil

1 onion, chopped OR 30ml / 2 tbsp dried onion

1 celery stick, sliced

15ml / 1 tbsp chopped celery leaves

2 small potatoes / 1 sweet potato, peeled and cubed

1 litre / 4 cups chicken stock

10 – 15ml / 2 – 3 tsp ground coriander

15ml / 1 tbsp chopped fresh coriander

200ml / 1 cup soya milk

Seasoning to taste

#### **Method**

Heat 30ml / 2 tbsp oil in a large pan and cook onion over a gentle heat for 3 – 4 min or until softened.

Add the celery and potato and cook for a few minutes. Then add the carrot. Fry vegetables over a gentle heat for 3 – 4 min, stirring frequently, then cover. Reduce heat and sweat vegetables for about 10 minutes. Stir occasionally so the vegetables do not stick to the base of the pan.

Add the stock and bring to the boil. Partially cover the pan and simmer for a further 8 – 10min or until the vegetables are tender.

Heat the remaining oil in a pan and fry the ground coriander for about 1min, stirring constantly.

Reduce the heat and add the fresh coriander and celery leaves. Fry for a further 1min and then set aside.

Process the soup in a blender then return to pan. Stir in milk and coriander mixture. Season to taste.

Heat gentle and serve.

### SIZZLING SALMON WITH HERBS – SERVES 4

#### **Ingredients**

4 salmon steaks (about 175 – 200gm each)

30ml / 2 tbsp olive oil

45ml / 3 tbsp chopped fresh ginger OR 30ml / 2 tbsp ground ginger

90ml / 6 tbsp chopped spring onions

90ml / 6 tbsp chopped fresh coriander

50ml soy sauce plus extra to serve

Seasoning to taste

## **Method**

Bring some water to the boil in the bottom of a steamer.

Season fish on both sides. Place in top part of steamer. Cover the pan and steam for 7 – 8min or until opaque all the way through.

Heat the oil in a pan and gently cook the ginger and spring onion.

Place the salmon on warmed plates. Divide the chopped coriander among the salmon. Spoon over the ginger and spring onion mix. Drizzle 15ml / 1 tbsp soy sauce over the top and serve with small bowls of soy sauce.

## THREE COLOUR TAGLIATELLE – SERVES 4

### **Ingredients**

2 large zucchini

2 large carrots

250gm fresh tagliatelle (or linguine)

60ml / 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Flesh of 2 roasted garlic cloves plus extra roasted garlic cloves to serve OR 10ml / 2 tsp crushed raw garlic or garlic puree

Seasoning

30ml / 2 tbsp toasted sunflower seeds to serve

### **Method**

Using a vegetable peeler, cut the zucchini and carrots into long thin ribbons.

Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Place vegetable ribbons in a sieve and place in the boiling water. Boil for 30 seconds then remove and set aside.

Cook the pasta according to the directions on the packet until it is al dente. Drain the pasta. (You may prefer to cook it in a wire basket placed in the water to make it easier to drain.)

Return pasta to pan. Add vegetables, oil, garlic and seasoning. Toss over a medium to high heat until the pasta and vegetables are glistening with oil.

Serve immediately with extra roasted garlic and sunflower seeds.

## COOKING HINTS

- If you have difficulty carrying saucepans and draining the water when cooking pasta or veggies, use a metal colander or wire basket slightly smaller than the saucepan. Place this inside the saucepan with whatever you are cooking inside it. Once it is cooked, just lift out the colander / basket. All the water stays in the pan and you just have the food left.

## *Latest News*

There are many sites on the internet that publish articles on recent studies and news related to arthritis. If you want to keep up to date, check out some of the following. Each issue, we will list some of the latest studies and news articles.

<http://www.medscape.com>

<http://www.docguide.com> (use the “Select Channel” option)

<http://arthritis-research.com/start.asp>

[http://www.ivanhoe.com/channels/p\\_channel.cfm?channelid=CHAN-100001](http://www.ivanhoe.com/channels/p_channel.cfm?channelid=CHAN-100001)

<http://story.news.yahoo.com>

<http://www.health.gov.au/pbs/index.htm>

### ANTI-TUMOUR NECROSIS FACTOR THERAPY MAY REDUCE RISK OF HEART FAILURE IN PATIENTS WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) appear to have greater prevalence of heart failure, but anti-tumour necrosis factor therapy may reduce the risk of developing heart failure in these patients.

Doctor's Guide – March 3 2004

<http://www.docguide.com/news/content.nsf/news/8525697700573E1885256E480042AA95?OpenDocument&id=08133D380D89E7AE85256D3B00159F3B&c=Rheumatoid%20Arthritis&count=10>

### INFLIXIMAB DOSE ESCALATION OFTEN NEEDED, NOT ALWAYS HELPFUL IN RA

In the experience of a group of clinicians from Greece, patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) receiving recommended doses of the anti-TNF agent infliximab often require dose escalations to control disease and, for many, upping the dose does not sufficiently curb disease activity.

Medscape – February 16 2004

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/469334>

### ETANERCEPT PLUS METHOTREXATE EFFECTIVE IN RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

The combination of etanercept and methotrexate reduces the symptoms and joint destruction of rheumatoid arthritis more than either drug alone, according to the results of a randomised, double-blind trial.

Medscape – February 27 2004

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/470547>

### PROGRESSION OF ARTHRITIS SIMILAR AFTER EARLY OR DELAYED DMARD TREATMENT

The 4-year rate of joint destruction in rheumatoid arthritis is similar after the initiation of early or delayed disease-modifying antirheumatic drug (DMARD) therapy, according to a report from The Netherlands.

Medscape – March 2004

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/471016>

### LONG-ACTING LEUKOTRIENE RECEPTOR ANTAGONIST SHOWS PROMISE IN RA

In patients with moderately severe rheumatoid arthritis, BIIL 284, an experimental oral long-acting leukotriene B4 (LTB4) receptor antagonist effectively inhibits LTB4-induced expression of the adhesion molecule Mac-1 (CD11b/CD18), results indicate.

Medscape – February 13 2004

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/469249>

### ELEVATED INTERLEUKIN-16 APPEARS TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH JOINT DAMAGE IN RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Interleukin-16 (IL-16) levels are elevated and involved in joint destruction in patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), and predict the development of RA in patients with undifferentiated arthritis, according to a new study.

Doctor's Guide - January 28 2004

<http://www.docguide.com/news/content.nsf/news/8525697700573E1885256E14003E5DDA?OpenDocument&c=Rheumatoid%20Arthritis&count=10&id=08133D380D89E7AE85256D3B00159F3B>

## LOW-GRADE INFLAMMATION MAY BE PRESENT IN ADVANCED OSTEOARTHRITIS

Higher levels of high sensitivity C reactive protein (hsCRP) are seen in patients with advanced hip and knee osteoarthritis (OA), suggesting a potential low grade inflammatory response, according to a German cross-sectional study. Moreover, higher hsCRP levels are seen in patients experiencing greater pain.

Doctor's Guide - January 26 2004

<http://www.docguide.com/news/content.nsf/news/8525697700573E1885256E1D003BE06E?OpenDocument&id=08133D380D89E7AE85256D3B00159F3B&c=Osteoarthritis&count=10>

## *Points to Ponder*

### BRAIN FOG POEM

- Author Unknown

My forgetter's getting better  
But my rememberer is broke  
To you that may seem funny  
But, to me, that is no joke  
For when I'm "here" I'm wondering  
If I really should be "there"  
And, when I try to think it through  
I haven't got a prayer!  
Often times I walk into a room  
Say "what am I here for?"  
I wrack my brain but all in vain  
A zero, is my score  
At times I put something away  
Where it is safe, but, Gee!  
The person it is safest from  
Is, generally, me!  
When shopping I may see someone,  
Say "Hi" and have a chat  
Then, when the person walks away  
I ask myself "who was that?"  
Yes my forgetter's getting better  
While my rememberer is broke  
And it's driving me plumb crazy  
And that isn't any joke

### QUOTE FROM BOOK BY STEPHEN WHITE:

"Indeed, why not me? I'd like to think I'm as well prepared as anybody for living with this illness. Don't pity me, honey. Just know me. This illness is one of the constellations in the sky. It's there. Like the Little Dipper. Sometimes it's obscured, sometimes it's the brightest light in the sky. But it's always there. I don't think about it all the time. When I do look up, it's there. That's all, just there. Part of my sky."

The information provided in this newsletter should not replace the advice and guidance of your own health-care providers. All material is provided for educational and informational purposes only and is the opinion of the authors. Please check with your doctor before making any changes to your treatment.