

The Bone and Joint Decade Global Alliance for Musculoskeletal Health: A Lay Perspective

Nick Welch

Before I was nominated to be elected as an International Ambassador to The Bone and Joint Decade Global Alliance for Musculoskeletal Health (BJD) I did not know of its existence. This has made me wonder who else is unaware of the Alliance's existence and its goals.

The BJD is a global organisation whose expressed goals are to raise the recognition of the importance of musculoskeletal conditions at global, regional and national levels by:

- Raising awareness of the burden of musculoskeletal conditions;
- Developing sustainable networks;
- Increasing knowledge of the suffering and costs of musculoskeletal conditions;
- Empowering people to prioritise their own care;
- Improving access to cost-effective prevention and treatment;
- Increasing research into musculoskeletal disorders, prevention and treatment;
- Providing access to supportive information.

In Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas there are dedicated ambassadors seeking to raise the profile of musculoskeletal disease and its human and economic impact on society. They also help develop their National Action Networks, facilitate strategic contacts and work with the

International Coordinating Council to achieve the goals of the BJD.

The Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance (ARMA) co-ordinates the British National Action Network... and currently Professor Anthony Woolf, Professor of Rheumatology, chairs the International Coordinating Committee. It is worth visiting the website for more information - <http://bjdonline.org>.

From my perspective in the UK, and England in particular, the often fractionated and cost-restrictive commissioning of musculoskeletal conditions, some even blacklisted as 'procedures of limited clinical value', means patients suffer unnecessary pain and mobility issues. The social and health economies suffer because these people cannot contribute fully to society, whilst also needing costly support.

There are three groups in this arena: the commissioners, the social- and health-care providers and the patients:

- It is the responsibility of the commissioners to ensure sufficient funds are put aside to provide an integrated social- and health-care programme for all patients with musculoskeletal disease. They have the dual objectives of managing current patients, as well as preventing the various conditions in future generations;

- All social- and health-care providers should work together to ensure that every patient has an optimised and individualised care pathway, which includes treatment, palliation and self-awareness training. It is also important to identify people at risk of musculoskeletal disease and provide the necessary support to help them minimise the impact of their musculoskeletal disease on themselves and society;

- Every patient has the responsibility to learn what he or she can do to help themselves. Exercise, weight control, smoking cessation and responsible alcohol consumption are all important.

This global initiative is worthy of wider exposure, and greater support. Its objectives are nothing more than common sense - promoting the needs of patients over the dictates of the 'pen-pushers' is an on-going and seemingly endless battle. Tally-ho!!!! ■

Nick Welch is a Past Chair of the BOA's Patient Liaison Group. He was recently appointed an International Ambassador for the Bone and Joint Decade, and is the PPI representative on several orthopaedic trials.



Nick Welch