



EDITORIAL

Musculoskeletal regeneration research network: A global initiative



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Global impact of musculoskeletal disorders

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified the four most lethal, noncommunicable diseases affecting the greatest proportion of the world population as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, respiratory diseases, and diabetes. While musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions are the second greatest cause of disability and account for one-third of all work sick leave [1], the WHO does not place the same awareness on MSK conditions. Greater awareness of diseases maintains visibility, which leads to greater funding for research and education, making it more difficult for the under-recognised diseases to gain the necessary resources to make an impact in the field [2].

It is thus imperative for MSK interest groups to appeal to not only the WHO, but also governments, pharmaceutical companies, and regulatory bodies to give greater attention to MSK conditions. For instance, the Bone and Joint Decade (BJD) has contributed to the WHO Global Disability Action Plan, which is a systematic review similar to that of the highlighted noncommunicable diseases. The BJD has also contributed to the WHO report on ageing and health, which will be followed by an action plan [3]. While BJD has done an excellent job in promoting global awareness of MSK conditions, especially with larger organisations, the question about how advantageous this is for individual institutions in making a translational difference remains controversial. For this reason, smaller groups who are able to establish in-depth discussions and co-ordinate themselves around a centralised goal are essential.

Some organisations are already recognising this need to support the study of numerous diseases. Horizon 2020 is the largest European Union Research and Innovation programme, with explicit recognition of MSK conditions. This programme not only funds orthopaedic projects, but encourages cross-disciplinary research, thus allowing for a disease to be holistically studied and treated [4,5], and access to such grants will be greater achieved by groups focused on one goal with multiple fields of expertise.

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