

FACT SHEET

Information for Policymakers on PMR

This document was developed for a CDC-sponsored project, Building Capacity for Polymyalgia Rheumatica Education and Awareness, (CDC-RFA-DP23-0067).



A CALL TO ACTION

Polymyalgia Rheumatica (PMR) is a chronic inflammatory rheumatic condition that primarily affects adults aged 50 and older, with an average age of onset at 70. It is characterized by muscle pain and stiffness, particularly in the shoulders, neck, and hips. PMR is often accompanied by systemic symptoms such as fatigue, fever, and weight loss. Without timely diagnosis and treatment, PMR can lead to significant disability, loss of independence, and increased healthcare costs.

CHALLENGES CAUSED BY UNTREATED PMR

-  **Physical Disability:** Chronic pain and stiffness can limit mobility, making daily tasks such as dressing, walking, or climbing stairs difficult.
-  **Economic Burden:** Patients with untreated PMR are more likely to require caregiving, assistive devices, or long-term care.
-  **Quality of Life:** Disability leads to loss of independence and increased rates of depression and social isolation

HEALTH DISPARITIES AND BARRIERS TO CARE

-  **Underdiagnosis:** PMR is often misdiagnosed or unrecognized in primary care settings due to overlapping symptoms with other conditions.
-  **Access to Specialists:** Delays in referral to rheumatologists can worsen outcomes, particularly in rural or underserved areas.
-  **Financial Barriers:** Out-of-pocket costs for treatments, physical therapy, and frequent follow-ups can be prohibitive for many patients.

KEY FACTS

-  **Prevalence:** Approximately 700,000 cases in the United States, with increasing incidence due to an aging population.
-  **Impacts of Delayed Treatment:** Can lead to prolonged suffering, increased risk of complications, and higher healthcare costs.
-  **Association with Giant Cell Arteritis (GCA):** Up to 20% of PMR patients may develop GCA, a potentially sight-threatening condition requiring immediate attention.



WHAT POLICY ACTION IS NEEDED

INCREASE AWARENESS AMONG PROVIDERS AND THE PUBLIC



Encourage educational campaigns intended for primary care providers to improve early recognition and diagnosis.



Promote public awareness of PMR symptoms and the importance of seeking care promptly.

SUPPORT RESEARCH INTO PMR AND GCA



Fund research initiatives to improve understanding of PMR's underlying causes, risk factors, and treatment options.



Support clinical trials for safer, more effective therapies, particularly for steroid-sparing medications.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO CARE



Expand telehealth services for patients in remote areas.



Ensure access to rheumatologists and other specialists for timely treatment.

ADDRESS FINANCIAL BARRIERS



Advocate for insurance coverage of advanced diagnostic tools (e.g., imaging like ultrasounds).



Ensure affordable access to medications such as corticosteroids, methotrexate, and new treatments like sarilumab.

IMPACT OF POLICY CHANGES



IMPROVED PATIENT OUTCOMES

Early and accurate treatment of PMR can restore mobility, and reduce pain.



REDUCED HEALTHCARE COSTS

Timely intervention minimizes unnecessary diagnostic testing, hospitalizations, and disability-related expenses.



ENHANCED PUBLIC HEALTH

Policies supporting awareness, research, and access will benefit not only PMR patients but also those with other inflammatory and autoimmune conditions.

MONITOR AND ADDRESS LONG-TERM DISABILITY



Recognize PMR as a condition that can lead to disability if not treated appropriately.



Support disability benefits and workplace accommodations for individuals with severe PMR.

