



Pursuing Remission in Latin America

Inflammatory rheumatic conditions place a heavy burden on patients. But remission – the disappearance of a disease’s signs and symptoms – can transform daily life by reducing pain and fatigue, restoring normal routines and improving overall well-being. Yet in Latin America, many barriers stand in the way of remission.

Patient advocates and other stakeholders across Latin America gathered to discuss barriers and solutions to achieving remission. The Global Remission Coalition is committed to shedding light on these challenges and advocacy priorities so patients across the region can access the full benefits of remission.

Barriers to Achieving Remission

While early diagnosis and timely treatment are proven to improve outcomes, patients in Latin America often face systemic obstacles:



Primary care limitations:

In many Latin American countries, only rheumatologists can prescribe certain medications, preventing patients from starting treatment in primary care.



Shortage of specialists:

Limited opportunities for medical training, rheumatology specialists and professional development restrict workforce growth and increase patient wait times.



Fragmented healthcare systems:

Weak central structures contribute to drug supply issues and unequal treatment access.



Concentrated access:

Care is often concentrated in larger cities, posing challenges for rural patients.



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Advocacy Priorities

To overcome these barriers and help patients pursue remission, advocates are calling for:



Strengthened primary care:

Allowing treatment initiation at the primary care level and educating physicians on managing these conditions can speed up access and reduce delays. In Argentina, patients teamed up with medical students to share their experiences, which led to faster diagnosis of those seen at teaching hospitals.



Trusted patient-provider relationships:

Each remission journey is unique. Patients must feel supported in navigating treatment and confident in their providers.



Expanded mental health support:

Rheumatic conditions take a heavy toll on patients' mental health. Policies that leverage technology, promote self-management and connect patients to support groups are essential.



Integrated care models:

Coordinated, multidisciplinary care offers the best outcomes. In Colombia, an innovative disease-management program involved rheumatology, nutrition, psychology and physical therapy for RA patients – increasing the proportion of people reaching remission from 21% to 59%.¹



Telehealth options:

Providing telehealth options can help reach rural patients and relieve some of the burden on larger urban health centers. In Brazil, telehealth was used to reach indigenous and other vulnerable populations that wouldn't have access to a specialist otherwise.

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The Path Forward

The sooner remission is achieved, the sooner patients and health systems can reap the benefits. But every region is different. By focusing on region-specific barriers and priorities, policymakers in Latin America can better meet patient needs and advance the pursuit of remission.

Reference

¹ Santos-Moreno P, Castillo P, Villareal L, Pineda C, Sandoval H, Valencia O. Clinical Outcomes of Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis Treated in a Disease Management Program: Real-World Results. Open Access Rheumatol. 2020;12:249–256. Published 2020 Nov 6. doi:10.2147/OARRR.S270700



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