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The Ankylosing Spondylitis Association of Ireland (ASAI) is holding information meetings in Dublin (12th September), Cork (19th September) and Galway (26th September) to update those with an interest in Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS) on new developments in the treatment and management of the condition.

Seoirse Smith, Secretary of the ASAI said, “The purpose of these meetings is to give interested parties the opportunity to hear at first hand the new developments in the treatment and management of AS which are giving hope to sufferers around the world.”

AS is a painful, progressive, rheumatic disease. It mainly affects the spine but it can also affect other joints, tendons and ligaments.

Men, women and children can all suffer from AS. However, it typically strikes people in their late teens and twenties, with the average age being 24. However, symptoms can start at other periods of life. AS is more common in men, with nearly three times as many men having it as women.

“Because early symptoms are often attributed to more common back problems or sports injuries, it can be hard to diagnose. As with many serious conditions, the earlier the problem is diagnosed and treatment provided, the better the outcome for the person living with AS. Early diagnosis assists in modifying the progression of the disease, helps control the pain and stiffness and limits the extent of permanent disability, so it is important that we create greater awareness of the condition and encourage people not to ignore any persistent pain in their back”, said Seoirse Smith.

The most common symptom of AS is joint pain which usually begins at the lower end of

the spine. The second most commonly affected area is the chest part of the spine but it can also affect other joints tendons and ligaments. Other areas such as the eyes, heart lung and bowel can also be involved. As a result of this condition, the vertebrae can fuse or grow together. Although increasingly rare as understanding of the disease increases, at its most severe, it can lead to major deformity. It is not possible to prevent AS, so the objective of treatment is to limit joint damage and to maintain maximum level of movement in the affected joints.

Consultant Rheumatologists, Dr. Conor McCarthy, Dr. Sinead Harney and Dr. Adrian Gibbs will address the information meetings in Dublin, Cork and Galway respectively and a Physiotherapist or Rheumatology Nurse will also provide helpful tips on how to manage the condition.

“The meetings will also provide an opportunity for those with AS to share their experiences and perhaps learn new ways of managing their condition. We are very grateful to Dr. McCarthy, Dr. Harney and Dr. Gibbs for giving their time to address the meeting”, added Seoirse Smith.

The meetings, which are being supported by an educational grant from Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, will be held in;

- The Plaza Hotel, Tallaght, Dublin on Wednesday 12th September at 7.30pm
- Rochestown Park Hotel, Cork on Wednesday 19th September at 7.30pm
- Galway Bay Hotel, Galway on Wednesday 26th September at 7.30pm

Admission is free and health professionals, people with AS or those with an interest in this area can book a place at the meeting by phoning Anne at 01 703 8618.

End.

For further information:

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