



PRESS RELEASE

New treatment for rheumatoid arthritis, RINVOQ (upadacitinib), became available on the PBS during COVID-19 lockdown^{1,2}

- *Due to COVID-19 lockdown many Australian rheumatoid arthritis (RA) patients may not have had the opportunity to learn about a new oral medication called RINVOQ*
- *Australians with severe active RA are now eligible to receive new oral medication RINVOQ, a once-daily Janus Kinase (JAK-1) selective inhibitor^{1,2}*
- *Local survey* reveals difficulties of those living with RA, with almost half of Australians surveyed having to reduce the number of hours they can work or study, or cease altogether³*
- *The majority (87%) of Australians aged 18-59 surveyed living with RA expressed that their life goals and personal aspirations were limited because of the symptoms of RA³*

SYDNEY AUSTRALIA, 26 JULY, 2020 - AbbVie (NYSE: ABBV), a research-based global biopharmaceutical company, has announced that RINVOQ[®] (upadacitinib), a once-daily JAK-1 selective inhibitor, for the treatment of adult patients with moderate to severe active rheumatoid arthritis¹ who have responded inadequately to, or who are intolerant to, one or more disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs)⁴ was recently made available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for patients with severe disease.²

With over 450,000 Australians living with RA, a condition that can affect anyone at any age, and may cause significant pain and disability,⁵ it's important that patients are aware that new treatments are available.

Rheumatologist Associate Professor Andrew Östör said that many patients may not have had the opportunity to learn about this new treatment option during the lockdown period.

"The most important goal of treating rheumatoid arthritis is to reduce joint pain and swelling and to maintain and/or improve joint function. The long-term goal of treatment is to slow or stop the disease process, particularly joint damage⁶," said Associate Professor Östör.

As many Australians return to work outside of home or commence job-seeking, recent research* showed how much RA can impact on the careers/studies of Australians suffering from RA— with almost half (45%) of people aged 18-59 years saying that rheumatoid arthritis has severely impacted upon their ability to work or study even before the pandemic hit³:

- Almost a third (29%) have had to reduce the number of hours they work or move to part-time or casual work/study due to RA,³ while 18% have had to cease work altogether.³

*This study was commissioned by AbbVie and conducted by YouGov Galaxy. The survey was conducted online between 13-17 February 2020 (pre-COVID), with a sample comprised of a nationally representative sample of 520 Australian rheumatoid arthritis patients aged 18 years and older. YouGov Galaxy designed the questionnaire. Following the completion of interviewing, the data was weighted by age, gender and region to reflect the latest ABS population estimates.

- 58% say that they often keep their true feelings about living with RA from their employer. While others say they also keep their true feelings from their family (30%)³ and friends (40%).³
- 41% said they feel greatly or somewhat limited in achieving their goals due to RA.³

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) typically begins in the smaller joints of the hands, wrists and feet, causing pain, stiffness, swelling and loss of function in the joints.^{7,8,9,10} If not appropriately managed, ongoing inflammation can lead to irreversible joint damage and loss of function.^{7,8,9,10} Beyond physical symptoms, rheumatoid arthritis also significantly impacts health-related quality of life, including emotional wellbeing and ability to perform daily activities.^{11,12} It also represents a substantial economic burden to patients and society.¹³

Rob Anderson, CEO of patient organisation Musculoskeletal Australia (MSK), says that there is still a strong perception among the public that RA is a condition that only affects much older people, when in fact it can occur at any age and many Australians are juggling career and family responsibilities while trying to manage the pain of the condition.

“Under normal circumstances RA can significantly impact people’s ability to work. With the advent of COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions, many people’s regular management routines have been disrupted. For many people with RA these disruptions can create additional challenges when it comes to maintaining work or finding new employment.

“Avoiding appointments with healthcare professionals during this period could lead to a progression of their symptoms. Furthermore, we have also observed that many people calling our MSK Help Line are anxious about their risk is of contracting COVID-19 as well as how the restrictions affect their access to care,” he said.

“It’s important that all Australians are aware that young people can be experiencing significant impacts of RA at this time. I call on anyone who is suffering in silence to reach out to their rheumatologist and talk about their management options, as new solutions are constantly becoming available.”

Early detection and diagnosis are critical in being able to treat symptoms, manage pain, and prevent irreversible joint damage.^{11,14} Scientific advances have improved therapies, moving from symptomatic relief through to slowing or preventing further joint damage.⁶ Despite the availability of current treatments, many of these patients do not achieve their treatment goals^{15,16} and therefore additional therapeutic options are needed.⁵

AbbVie Medical Director Alan Watts, said that advances in treatment options are vital to ensure that everyone living with the condition has access to treatment that may work for them.

“With over 20 years’ experience in discovering and delivering therapies for people living with RA, we are dedicated to improving care for people living with this condition. Although the considerable advances in RA treatment in the past 20 years has seen a dramatic improvement in the lives of many, there are still patients in our community who need alternative options. We are proud to be able to provide patients and specialists a new alternative.”

About RINVOQ (upadacitinib)^{1,4}

Discovered and developed by AbbVie, RINVOQ is a selective and reversible Janus Kinase 1 (JAK-1) inhibitor for the treatment of moderate to severe active rheumatoid arthritis.¹⁷



Important Safety Information^{1,4}

Therapy with RINVOQ should be started and monitored by a specialist with expertise in the management of rheumatoid arthritis.

RINVOQ must not be used if the patient has an allergy to upadacitinib or any of its ingredients, or if the patient has an active, serious infection. In addition, RINVOQ must not be used in combination with biologic disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs. Patients should tell their health care professional if they currently have an infection, have had an infection that keeps coming back, had herpes zoster infection, have had chicken pox, hepatitis or blood clots previously.

Prior to using RINVOQ, patients should be checked for tuberculosis (TB) infection. RINVOQ should not be given to patients with active TB. TB treatment may be required for patients with TB or have risks of having contracted TB.

Prior to initiating therapy with RINVOQ, completion of all appropriate immunisations should be considered according to current immunisation guidelines. However, RINVOQ should not be used with certain vaccines. Check this with the healthcare professional.

RINVOQ should be used with caution when certain other medications are being taken. Patient should inform their healthcare professional if they are taking any other medications. Common side effects include nose or throat infections, nausea, high liver enzyme levels, cough, fever, stomach discomfort, and weight gain.

RINVOQ should not be used during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

Please review the Consumer Medicines Information [here](#) for further safety information on RINVOQ.

About AbbVie

AbbVie is a global, research and development-based biopharmaceutical company committed to developing innovative advanced therapies for some of the world's most complex and critical conditions. The company's mission is to use its expertise, dedicated people and unique approach to innovation to markedly improve treatments across four primary therapeutic areas: immunology, oncology, virology and neuroscience. In more than 75 countries, AbbVie employees are working every day to advance health solutions for people around the world. For more information about AbbVie, please visit us at www.abbvie.com.au. Follow [@abbvie](#) on Twitter, [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Instagram](#).

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