

Anniversary Milestone: ENDOTARGET's First Year of Rheumatic Disease Research

ENDOTARGET is an EU project investigating the relationship between gut microbiota, intestinal permeability, and systemic endotoxemia to understand the triggering factors for health-to-disease transition in rheumatic diseases, i.e. osteoarthritis (OA), rheumatoid arthritis (RA), spondylarthritis (SpA). Since the 1st of January 2023, the ENDOTARGET consortium, led by HUS Helsinki University Hospital, has been working together through nine interconnected work packages.

Within the first year of the project, the consortium has met twice in person. During the project kick-off in February 2023 in Helsinki, Finland, the ENDOTARGET consortium partners exchanged ideas and discussed the first steps of the project's implementation. Eight months later, the consortium gathered again for the second biannual consortium meeting in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Here, everyone was updated on the project's progress and the consortium prioritised the activities for the next year.



What has been achieved in the first year of ENDOTARGET?

In the first year of the project, the consortium set up infrastructures, tested and validated workflows and technologies, and prepared the different clinical trials, including the detailed design of the study plans and the application for ethical approvals. Furthermore, the first *in vitro* measurements on cohort samples were performed in the different work packages, and the first results, e.g. on inflammatory effects of structural bacterial compounds on joint tissue, were obtained. The consortium has also started to extract data (clinical, genomic, metabolomic, metagenomic and lifestyle) from the different population cohorts that are included in the project. Due to the extensive preparatory work of the consortium, the following clinical studies have been able to start within the first year of ENDOTARGET and are currently ongoing:

- 1.) Observational LEAKY (Leaked endotoxins as key drivers of chronic inflammation, Portugal) study to investigate gut permeability in RA and SpA patients.
- 2.) Clinical trial (Finland) to explore the effect of fecal transplantation in SpA patients.
- 3.) TASTY diet intervention study (Portugal) to analyse the effect of Mediterranean diet in RA patients.

Next to the extensive scientific work, the ENDOTARGET partners joined efforts in the work packages "Ethics, Regulations & GDPR", "Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation" and "Project Management". During this first year, a data management plan was established, as well as an independent Data and Safety Monitoring Board. Furthermore, the ENDOTARGET website and social media accounts on LinkedIn and X were launched, and different communication materials were developed. The consortium has also established collaborations with other relevant projects and initiatives and has already carried out joint dissemination/communication activities, as well as joint scientific activities. In addition, as measures to ensure a successful and high-quality project, the coordinator team created a project handbook and the development of a risk management plan is in progress.

For more information:

Project Coordinator Team

Helsinki University Hospital (HUS), Helsinki, Finland

Project Coordinator

Kari Eklund (Kari.eklund@hus.fi)

Deputy Project Coordinator

Gonçalo Barreto (Goncalo.barreto@helsinki.fi)

Project Manager

Ana Valkama (Ana.valkama@hus.fi)

Stay updated!

 www.endotargetproject.eu

 [@ENDOTARGET EU Project](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ENDOTARGET-EU-Project)

 [@ENDOTARGET_EU](https://twitter.com/ENDOTARGET_EU)

