

This House Believes that Pre-RA Should Be Treated: Report from the Great Debate

By Henry Aaverns, MBChB, FRCP(UK), FRCPC

As always, the Great Debate brought together four great minds from the CRA to engage in high-level academic debate on the subject of rheumatoid arthritis (RA). The question of the day was, “Be it resolved that this house believes pre-RA should be treated.” On the “for” side were Dr. Volodko Bakowsky and Dr. Derek Haaland, squaring off “against” Dr. Rob McDougall and Dr. Hani El-Gabalawy to discuss the concept of pre-RA and what treatment should be considered.

Dr. Bakowsky handily identified that it would be advantageous if we could actually understand the definition of pre-RA; he humbly helped us understand why he describes himself as Jack-of-all-trades and master of none.

Dr. El-Gabalawy raised some compelling arguments against treating pre-RA, though the audience could be forgiven for suggesting we should send his slides to a group of psychologists to help understand what lurks in his mind.

Dr. Haaland’s rebuttal was a work of art, and largely informed by Dr. El-Gabalawy’s own publication—to

use one’s opponent’s work against them is sheer brilliance.

Dr. McDougall wound up the debate; after realizing that there was a danger things could be lost for the “against” team, he quickly adopted the art of obfuscation and personal abuse, to the delight of the audience, who were then treated to a lesson on Scottish whisky (as opposed to beer, which should be renamed pre-whisky, apparently).

The Haaland-Bakowsky team led us in to a musical finale which will remain the stuff of legend, and which will no doubt cause future debaters to pause before accepting the challenge.

In the end, both sides put forth such compelling arguments that the debate was declared a draw, much like the fantastic artwork which accompanied this face-off.

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