



INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
on Spondyloarthritis

3 - 5 September
2026

Ghent, Belgium

**PRELIMINARY
PROGRAMME**

President

Atul Deodhar (USA)

Local Organising Committee

Dirk Elewaut (Belgium) and Filip Van den Bosch (Belgium)

Honorary Scientific Committee

Eric Veys (Belgium – Founder)
Herman Mielants (Belgium – Founder)
Paul Bowness (UK)

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John Reveille (USA)
Martin Rudwaleit (Germany)
Georg Schett (Germany)
Jochen Sieper (Germany)
Desirée van der Heijde (The Netherlands)
David Yu (USA)

Scientific Committee

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Francesco Ciccia (Italy)
Laura Coates (UK)
Félicie Costantino (France)
Maria-Antonietta D'Agostino (Italy)
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Nigil Haroon (Canada)
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Walter Maksymowych (Canada)
Sofia Ramiro (The Netherlands)
Percival Sampaio-Barros (Brazil)
Jose Scher (USA)
Lai-Shan Tam (PR China)
Ranjeny Thomas (Australia)

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is my great pleasure to invite you to the **15th International Congress on Spondyloarthritis**, which will take place at De Bijloke in Ghent from **3 to 5 September 2026**.

This remarkable venue, one of Ghent's historic hospitals and an architectural jewel of the city, offers an inspiring setting in the heart of the historic centre, within walking distance of most hotels.

Over the years, this congress has become a leading international meeting in the field of spondyloarthritis, bringing together scientists, clinicians, allied health professionals, industry representatives, and people living with these conditions from across the globe. The meeting is renowned for its high scientific standards, distinguished faculty, and stimulating multidisciplinary discussions.

The scientific programme will highlight the latest advances in clinical, translational, and basic research, imaging, and therapeutics in Spondyloarthritis. In addition, we are preparing sessions that will explore future directions in medicine and their potential impact on the understanding and management of these diseases.

A highlight of the congress will once again be the "Gent Oration," dedicated to honouring a scientist or clinician internationally recognised for outstanding career contributions to the field. The organizing committee is delighted to nominate one of the most influential clinical researchers in the field of rheumatology – not simply in spondyloarthritis. Spanning last three decades, Désirée van der Heijde has single-handedly changed how we assess inflammatory arthritides – from development of ASAS20/40, ASDAS and scores of other clinical assessment tools in axSpA, to DAS28 and imaging assessment tools such as Sharp van der Heijde scores in rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis. We will hear from Desirée about her remarkable career and what she sees as her legacy.

Supporting and encouraging the next generation of SpA researchers remains one of the central goals of this congress. The programme will therefore include dedicated opportunities for networking, interactive poster discussions, and short oral presentations selected from top-ranked abstracts.

We also look forward to continuing our tradition of lively debate sessions addressing controversial topics in clinical science.

We hope this meeting will provide an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas, strengthen collaborations, reconnect with colleagues and friends, and create new connections within the international SpA community.

I very much look forward to welcoming you to Ghent in September!

Yours sincerely,

Atul Deodhar,
President, International Congress on Spondyloarthritis

- 12.50 **Welcome Address**
Atul Deodhar, President
- 13.00 **Keynote lecture**
- Session I: SpA disease mechanisms**
- 13.45 **T cells in the pathogenesis of SpA**
Michael Paley, St. Louis, USA
- 14.10 **Interface inflammation, joints and spine**
Kristi Kuhn, Aurora, USA
- 14.35 **Enthesis biology and mechanical stress**
Eric Gracey, Ghent, Belgium
- 15.00 **Selected Oral Presentations I**
- 15.15 **Coffee Break & Poster Viewing**
- Session 2: SpA Genetics: HLA-B27 and Beyond**
- 16.00 **Case closed: Has the arthritogenic peptide hypothesis finally won?**
Bob Colbert, Washington, USA
- 16.25 **SpA genetics beyond MHC class I**
Félicie Costantino, Versailles Saint Quentin, France
- 16.50 **Polygenic risk scores, where are we now?**
Matt Brown, London, UK
- 17.15 **Selected Oral Presentations II**

Session 3: Hands-On AI

- 18.00 **Tool and tricks for using AI in research**
Paras Karmacharya, Nashville, USA
- 18.30 **Walking Dinner**

Session 4: Psoriatic disease

- 08.30 **A dermatologist's perspective of PsA**
TBD
- 08.55 **Axial PsA vs. axial SpA**
Peter Nash, Brisbane, Australia
- 09.20 **GLP-1 receptor agonists in inflammatory arthritis:
From metabolic risk to therapeutic opportunity**
Derin Karacabeyli, Vancouver, Canada
- 09.45 Coffee Break & Poster Viewing

Session 5: Advancing drug development

- 11.15 **Engineering the biologics of the future**
Paul Parren, Leiden, The Netherlands
- 11.40 **Turning viruses into drugs**
Paul Peter Tak, Needham, USA
- 12.05 **Emerging therapies in spondyloarthritis**
Atul Deodhar, Portland, USA
- 12.30 Selected Oral Presentations III
- 12.45 Lunch Break
- 13.45 **The Ghent SpA Oration**
Désirée van der Heijde, Meerssen, The Netherlands
- 14.30 Selected Oral Presentations IV
- 15.15 Coffee Break & Poster Viewing

Session 6: SpA imaging

- 16.00 **Molecular imaging in SpA**
David Simon, Berlin, Germany
- 16.25 **Technological advances in spine imaging**
Patrick Omoumi, Lausanne, Switzerland
- 16.50 Selected Oral Presentations V
- 19.30 Gala Dinner



Session 7: Innovations in clinical trial methodology

08.30	Novel trial designs Laura Coates, Oxford, UK
08.55	Clinical trials as probes of disease pathogenesis Georg Schett, Erlangen, Germany
09.20	Lessons from the past for the clinical trials of the future TBD
09.45	Coffee Break & Poster Viewing
11.15	Selected Oral Presentations VI
12.15	The Grand Debate Precision medicine is the only way forward in spondyloarthritis For: Maria-Antonietta D'Agostino, Rome, Italy Against: Robert Landewe, Meersen, The Netherlands
13.00	Closing remarks Filip van den Bosch and Dirk Elewaut, Local Organisers
13.15	Farewell Aperitif

	Until 10/07	As of 11/07
Participant MD	€ 650,00	€ 700,00
Student/researcher/non-MD with abstract	€ 450,00	€ 500,00
Industry Participant (sponsor)	€ 1000,00	€ 1100,00
Industry Participant (non-sponsor)	€ 2500,00	€ 2600,00
Congress Dinner on Friday 4 September	€ 95,00	€ 95,00

**Proof of status must be uploaded during the registration process.*

The registration fee includes:

- Access to all lectures
- Access to the exhibition
- Coffee breaks and lunches as mentioned in the programme
- Opening Reception & Walking Dinner on Thursday 3 September
- Farewell Reception on Saturday 5 September

Participation into the Opening Reception & Walking Dinner and the Farewell Reception is free but pre-registration is required. Separate registration and payment is required for the Congress Dinner on Friday 4 September.

Payment

Payment is to be made by credit card. Only VISA and MasterCard are accepted.

Cancellations

Cancellations received no later than 15 August, entitle registered persons to a 50% refund. In order to cancel your registration and/or hotel booking please contact Elise Laroy: elise@medicongress.com

A number of hotel rooms have been booked at special group rates, including breakfast and VAT.

The rates are available on the website (<https://spa-congress.org/hotelaccommodation>) and are only valid for reservations made through Medicongress. Housing requests are filled in order of receipt. If the hotel of your choice is filled, you will be assigned to another hotel.

Hotel availability cannot be guaranteed after August 15. Any requests for hotel accommodation must be accompanied by a credit card number, in order to secure the room. This credit card will not be charged by the organisers but only serves as a reservation guarantee. Participants will have to pay their hotel room and personal expenses at the reception of the hotel. In case of late cancellation or no show, the room will be charged on the credit card.

A hotel confirmation will be sent by email after receipt of the registration form and housing request and payment of the registration fee.

Venue

De Bijloke
Bijlokekaai 7
9000 Gent
<https://www.bijloke.be/>

De Bijloke is located in the city centre, within walking distance from the hotels.

Dates

Thursday 3 September – Saturday 5 September 2026

Language

The official congress language is English.

Exhibition

A medical exhibition is held on the occasion of the Congress. Access is free for registered participants. The exhibition is not accessible for non-MDs.

Catering

Coffee breaks and lunches will be served in the exhibition area.

WiFi

Free WiFi is offered to all participants and exhibitors. The WiFi access code will be available onsite.

Liability

Neither the organisers nor Medicongress accept liability for damages and/ or losses of any kind which may be incurred by Congress participants during the Congress. Participants are advised to take out insurance against loss, accidents or damage which could be incurred during the Congress. Organisation and Administration

Organisation and Administration

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ALFASIGMA 

The Alfasigma logo consists of the word 'ALFASIGMA' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized icon of a car's front end, rendered in black, white, and red.