Lupus Awareness Month Facts 2017

1. Lupus is an inflammatory, multisystem, autoimmune disease of unknown cause that may impact virtually any organ system in the body.
2. Lupus is an autoimmune disease – meaning the body’s immune system becomes misdirected and attacks the very organs it was designed to protect.
3. Lupus is NOT contagious.
4. Lupus is not like or related to cancer or HIV/AIDS.
5. Lupus is somewhat genetic - research suggests that genetics plays an important role, but it also shows that genes alone do not determine who gets lupus, and that other factors play a role.
6. Lupus can be a mild disease, a severe and life-threatening disease or anything in between.
7. Lupus is difficult to diagnose: more than half of the people with lupus suffer four or more years and visit 3 or more doctors before receiving a diagnosis.
8. Lupus has many different symptoms and affects each person differently.
9. Lupus is characterized by periods of illness, called flares, and periods of wellness, or remission.
10. Researchers do not know the cause of lupus.
11. 90% of people with lupus are women; however, anyone at any age can develop the disease.
12. Women of color are at greater risk for developing lupus – 2-3 times higher than Caucasian women.
13. Studies have confirmed that one virus, Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), which causes mononucleosis, is a cause of lupus in genetically susceptible people.
14. Lupus is often called “The Great Masquerader” because it can mimic viral syndromes, malignancies, allergic reactions, stress and other disorders.
15. Initial symptoms for lupus may be non-specific: fatigue, achiness, stiffness, low grade fevers, swollen lymph nodes or rashes.
16. Lupus symptoms may develop slowly or suddenly.
17. The range and effectiveness of treatments for lupus have increased dramatically in recent decades, giving doctors more choices in how to manage the disease.
18. Clinical studies have found that continuous treatment for lupus with antimalarials may prevent flares from recurring.
19. Research on work loss associated with lupus estimated that almost 3/4 of the study’s participants would stop working before the usual age of retirement.

20. Learning to recognize the warning signs of a flare can help the patient take steps to ward it off or reduce its intensity.

21. People with lupus should receive regular health care, instead of seeking help only when symptoms worsen.

22. If new lupus symptoms are identified early, treatments may be more effective.

23. Men and women with lupus need to have their blood pressure and cholesterol checked on a regular basis.

24. People with lupus are at increased risk of premature cardiovascular disease.

25. Warning signs of a lupus flare: increased fatigue, pain, rash, fever, abdominal discomfort, headache and dizziness.

26. Participating in a lupus support group can provide emotional help, boost self-esteem and morale, and help develop or improve coping skills.

27. One of the primary goals of wellness for people with lupus is coping with the stress of having a chronic disorder.

28. Although pregnancy in women with lupus is considered high risk, most women with lupus carry their babies safely to the end of their pregnancy.

29. Approximately 40% of people with lupus will develop kidney disease (nephritis).

30. The annual economic impact of lupus is estimated at more than $31 billion for direct and indirect costs in the US alone.

31. At present, there is no cure for lupus. However, lupus can be effectively treated, and most people with the disease can lead active, healthy lives.