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## National Rheumatology Group AARA Embraces Exagen Diagnostics' Novel Method to Collect and Test for Widely Used Therapies in Lupus and Rheumatoid Arthritis

ALBUQUERQUE, NM and SAN DIEGO, CA--(Marketwired - February 16, 2017) - Exagen Diagnostics, Inc. home of AVISE® testing announced today that AARA powered by Bendcare, a national organization of Rheumatologist in the United States with over 100 physician members, has recommended use of AVISE MTX (methotrexate polyglutamates) and AVISE HCQ (Whole blood Hydroxychloroquine) in routine practice.

AARA is reshaping Rheumatology with a focus on improving the patient journey through improved access, advocacy, technology, training, and education. Therapeutic drug monitoring and the new AVISE Touch collection method is perfectly aligned with AARA's objectives. Dr. Thierry Dervieux, Chief Scientific Officer at Exagen commented, "AARA/Bendcare recognize the importance of adopting new technologies that have good scientific evidence behind them. Adding, "they understand that any patient starting or being maintained on methotrexate or hydroxychloroquine therapy and not having an adequate response will benefit from these tests."

The timing could not be any better for this announcement, according to Exagen CEO Ron Rocca, "with the January launch of our novel AVISE Touch capillary blood collection method, we have eliminated the need for venipuncture blood draw which is a major hurdle for many patients. Physicians are likely to welcome this advanced approach to optimizing methotrexate given new patient outcome measures being observed by healthcare payers of all types."

The new AVISE Touch capillary collection method is described by Dr. Howard Busch, President of AARA and powered by Bendcare as being "a breakthrough innovative diagnostic test, that has application in over six (6) of our seventeen (17) Rheumatology pathways." Dr. Busch continued, "as clinicians in the 21st century, acquiring this ability to monitor compliance or simply identify DMARD therapeutic thresholds will add to our ability to improve the outcome of our patients which can potentially reduce resource utilization and ultimately cost. The [AVISE Touch collection kit](#) will empower Rheumatologists and the patients we care for to solve a critical problem facing the Rheumatologist in navigating the therapeutic options and ensuring quality cost-effective outcomes that help patients stay in low disease and achieve remission."

Dr. Michael Graven, VP of Econometrics for Bendcare added, "we see tools like AVISE therapeutic drug monitoring as imperative in the treatment of Rheumatic diseases. Testing levels of widely prescribed drugs like methotrexate and hydroxychloroquine allows physicians to optimize therapeutic outcomes before abandoning DMARDs.

AVISE MTX is a patented test measuring the active metabolites of methotrexate circulating in a patient's blood. There is significant variability among patients taking methotrexate in their absorption, excretion, and metabolism of this drug. Studies published in peer reviewed journals show how results from the AVISE MTX test can aid clinical decision making by revealing an individual's exposure level to the active metabolite of methotrexate.

#### About Exagen

Exagen Diagnostics, Inc. is a College of American Pathologists (CAP) accredited and CLIA certified rheumatology specialty laboratory that focuses on the significant unmet need for accurate and timely diagnosis, prognosis and monitoring of autoimmune connective tissue disease (CTD). Its groundbreaking solutions address the full continuum of care with tools designed and scientifically proven to help physicians deliver accurate, early diagnosis and optimized therapy. For more information, visit [www.AviseTest.com](http://www.AviseTest.com)

#### About Bendcare and AARA

Bendcare, LLC is a management services and innovation organization to America's largest Rheumatology group practice, American Arthritis and Rheumatology Associates (AARA) operating in 17 states. With over 100 providers since its inception in 2015, AARA gives physicians the ability to empower patients with lifelong chronic diseases. With the new infrastructure solutions powered by Bendcare, Rheumatologists can now standardize and simplify their practice and the care team can focus on quality outcomes, improved patient satisfaction and optimized practice performance. For more information, visit [www.bendcare.com](http://www.bendcare.com)

#### About Methotrexate

Methotrexate is a Disease-Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drug, or DMARD, that has been used for more than 20 years and is considered the foundation for the treatment of RA. Professional guidelines recommend that doctors and healthcare providers use methotrexate as the initial DMARD of choice for RA. In many patients, methotrexate may lower the pain and swelling caused by arthritis and can also lower the damage to joints and the risk of long-term disability. Methotrexate may begin working as early as 3 weeks, but it can take up to 12 weeks to get the full effect. Side effects experienced when taking methotrexate may be offset by taking folic acid.

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