

JOINT ACTION ON ARTHRITIS:

A FRAMEWORK TO IMPROVE ARTHRITIS PREVENTION AND CARE IN CANADA

Executive Summary

ARTHRITIS is a chronic disease that has devastating and debilitating effects on the lives of more than 4.6 million Canadians. In addition to the burden of pain and disability faced every day by individuals living with arthritis, it is the most common cause of disability in Canada. As a result, it is a significant cost to the public health care system and negatively affects workplace productivity and the Canadian economy. Arthritis knows no limits with respect to age or gender. Unfortunately, many Canadians living with the disease are told that it is “just arthritis”. Indeed, joint pain is often seen as simply a normal part of aging. The significance of arthritis, and the importance of doing something about it, are discounted.

How will Canada remain globally competitive when, by 2040, 1 in 3 workers (almost 30% of the employed labour force) will suffer hip or knee pain, disability and mobility difficulties?

A Growing and Costly Burden

Due to increased longevity, reduced physical activity, increasing obesity and lack of access to timely health care, the burden of arthritis is increasing. Within a generation, more than 10 million (one in four) Canadians are expected to have either osteoarthritis (OA) or rheumatoid arthritis (RA), the two most common forms of arthritis. The total economic burden of OA and RA in Canada, including direct health care costs and productivity losses to the economy, will grow from \$33.2 billion in 2010 (2.7% of the value of Canada’s Gross Domestic Product) to over \$68 billion in 2040 (2010 values).



Solutions are Available

The Arthritis Alliance has created Joint Action on Arthritis: A Framework to Improve Arthritis Prevention and Care in Canada with three primary goals:

- Communicate the arthritis community’s vision of the actions and interventions required to improve the lives of people living with arthritis.
- Galvanize action around long-term strategies to improve arthritis prevention, and quality and efficiency of care.
- Facilitate and focus collaboration among governments and arthritis stakeholders in awareness, models of care and research.

Joint Action on Arthritis presents evidence-based strategic directions and solutions, organized into six objectives under three strategic pillars, to achieve the desired goal of improving the lives of Canadians.

Pillar 1 - Advancing knowledge and awareness

Effective arthritis prevention and care are inhibited by a lack of knowledge, poor understanding and limited training about this chronic disease among the public, researchers, providers, governments and others. As a result, widely held myths about arthritis suggest that nothing can be done and that it is merely a natural part of aging. This is not true and under **Joint Action on Arthritis**, the Arthritis Alliance will:

- Objective 1:** Raise Awareness of Arthritis
- Objective 2:** Align and Strengthen Research in Arthritis
- Objective 3:** Enhance Professional Education with Respect to Arthritis

The time has come to improve not only the quality of life of millions of Canadians, but also the sustainability of our health care system and the productivity of our workforce.

Pillar II - Improving prevention and care

Today, it is essential that prevention and care strategies are improved in order to ensure a sustainable health care system for the future. Greater efficiencies and improved quality care can be achieved through prevention and self-management strategies and evidence-based models of care delivery. Under **Joint Action on Arthritis**, the Arthritis Alliance has the tools and expertise to:

Objective 4: Improve Prevention of Arthritis

Objective 5: Improve Access to and Delivery of the Best Care Possible (Models of Care)

Pillar III - Supporting ongoing stakeholder collaboration

The arthritis community has rallied and is focused toward addressing this underserved, chronic disease. However, key government and other stakeholders are needed at the table in order to successfully implement the Framework. Under **Joint Action on Arthritis**, the Arthritis Alliance will:

Objective 6: Broaden Stakeholder Participation in the Alliance

A Response is Required

The time has come to improve not only the quality of life of millions of Canadians, but also the sustainability of our health care system and the productivity of our workforce. The Alliance and its members have taken a leadership role in developing this Framework and will be approaching governments and other arthritis stakeholder organizations with specific requests for support and participation in implementing its initial priorities and actions.

Initial Priorities and Actions

Following the launch, the Arthritis Alliance will focus its efforts on the following initial priorities in order to begin implementing the Framework:

Raise Awareness of Arthritis – The arthritis community is aligned and has begun coordinating messages and promotional activities to improve awareness of arthritis among Canadians. To achieve the desired outcomes, the Arthritis Alliance must join with workplace, government and other stakeholders to launch a pan-Canadian strategy to raise awareness of key risk factors, consequences and prevention strategies for arthritis.

Improve Access to and Delivery of the Best Possible Arthritis Care – It is hard to believe that many Canadians do not receive timely and effective arthritis care. Members of the Arthritis Alliance have demonstrated expertise and have a proven track record in improving health care quality and efficiency. These local successes need to be expanded to cover other arthritis and related musculoskeletal disorders and implemented across Canada.

Align and Strengthen Research – Canada has a strong track record as an international leader in arthritis research. The Arthritis Alliance has established an expert Research Working Group to partner and work with governments and other arthritis research stakeholders to enhance and focus resources on research that will improve prevention and the delivery of arthritis care to Canadians.

Build Ongoing Stakeholder Collaboration – Since 2002, the Arthritis Alliance has unified the community to address challenges that could not be done alone. Now, with our major stakeholders focused and aligned, we must engage policy and decision makers (governments, etc.) to implement our vision.

Contact Us

Send us your feedback on **Joint Action for Arthritis: A Framework to Improve Arthritis Prevention and Care in Canada** to info@arthritisalliance.ca or visit www.arthritisalliance.ca.

The Arthritis Alliance of Canada, formerly the Alliance for the Canadian Arthritis Program (ACAP), was formed in 2002. Its goal is to improve the lives of Canadians with arthritis.

With more than 30 member organizations, the Alliance brings together arthritis health care professionals, researchers, funding agencies, governments, voluntary sector agencies, industry and, most importantly, representatives from arthritis consumer organizations from across Canada. While each member organization continues its own work, the Alliance provides a central focus for national arthritis-related initiatives.

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