



ARTHRITIS PREVENTION AND CARE SHOULD BE AN URGENT NATIONAL PRIORITY SAYS NATIONWIDE COALITION OF PATIENTS, PHYSICIANS AND PARTNERS

Arthritis Alliance of Canada Launches Framework for Improved Policies and Practices

Calgary (September 18, 2012) – A nationwide coalition of more than thirty groups including patients, health care providers, researchers, care organizations and industry partners today called upon Canadians to designate improved arthritis prevention and care as an urgent national priority. The Arthritis Alliance of Canada (AAC) outlined a plan to address this critical issue facing the country today in ***Joint Action on Arthritis: A Framework to Improve Arthritis Prevention and Care in Canada***, a plan that prioritizes areas of focus that will have the greatest impact on those living with arthritis.

“One in eight Canadians currently lives with some form of arthritis and, within our lifetimes, that number will rise to one in four,” said Dr. Dianne Mosher, President, Arthritis Alliance of Canada. “We need to make improved prevention and care of arthritis an urgent national priority on behalf of the 4.6 million Canadians living with this chronic disease. Our new Framework speaks with the loud voice of nearly three dozen experts and involved groups nationwide, offering a clear vision that will deliver results, improve clinical practice, and foster improved collaboration.”

The AAC Framework advocates a three-pillar approach to deliver better outcomes for those living with arthritis and reduce the burden of the disease on Canada’s healthcare system and the economy:

1. ***Advancing knowledge and awareness*** – to dispel the myth that nothing can be done to curb arthritis, to improve understanding of the disease, and to enhance and focus research funding on improving prevention and the delivery of arthritis care to Canadians – all the while expanding professional education for healthcare professionals.
2. ***Improving prevention and care*** – to create the conditions for earlier detection, diagnosis and intervention, to improve access and delivery of care and to encourage understanding of risk factors for arthritis.
3. ***Supporting ongoing stakeholder collaboration*** – to bring together and better focus the efforts and activities of the arthritis community.

“By establishing improved arthritis prevention and care as an urgent national priority, we can lessen the toll it takes today and tomorrow on the lives of Canadians in every corner and community in our country,” said Janet Yale, President and CEO of The Arthritis Society, a member organization of the Arthritis Alliance of Canada. “There is an important and necessary role for all to play in this effort – from patients to health care providers, from government to industry. Our Framework sets the goals and creates the conditions for a great national undertaking that can succeed.”

Today’s launch builds on last year’s release of [***The Impact of Arthritis in Canada: Today and Over the Next 30 Years***](#) report. The *Impact Report* revealed that arthritis costs the Canadian economy \$33.2 billion a year both directly and indirectly in health care costs and lost productivity. Today’s launch brings together patients, health care professionals, industry partners, researchers, and institutions, who will work together with government to implement the Framework’s initial priorities and outlined actions.

“The *Impact Report* highlighted the urgency for addressing the increasing burden arthritis plays and will play in years to come. If we do nothing, arthritis will cripple our economy and our healthcare system,” said Dr. Claire Bombardier, Co-Scientific Director, Canadian Arthritis Network, and a member of the AAC Executive Committee. “The Framework gives all of us a chance to put a targeted, measurable plan in place that gives us the best shot at alleviating the burden of the disease over the long term.”

Arthritis in Canada

Arthritis affects 4.6 million Canadians, and within a generation, more than 10 million (one in four) Canadians are expected to have either osteoarthritis (OA) or rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Arthritis can strike anyone at any time, regardless of age, physical condition or ethnic background and among all causes of disability in Canada, arthritis ranks first among women and second among men.¹

- There are currently more than 4.4 million people living with OA, and more than 272,000 people living with RA in Canada.
- There will be a new diagnosis of OA every 60 seconds, resulting in almost 30 per cent of the employed labour force having difficulty working due to OA.
- Approximately 1 in 136 workers is suffering from RA. Within a generation, this will increase to 1 in 68 workers.

About the Arthritis Alliance of Canada

The Arthritis Alliance of Canada was formed in 2002 as the Alliance for the Canadian Arthritis Program (ACAP). Its goal is to improve the lives of Canadians living with arthritis by working toward improved access to care and treatment, broadened education of the arthritis community and public and health policy makers, as well as increased arthritis research.

The Alliance includes more than 34 member organizations from across Canada, bringing together arthritis consumers and consumer organizations, arthritis health care professionals, researchers, funding agencies, governments, voluntary sector agencies and industry. While each member organization continues its own work, the Alliance provides a central focus for national arthritis-related initiatives.

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For more information about *the Joint Action on Arthritis: A Framework to Improve Arthritis Prevention and Care in Canada*, the Arthritis Alliance of Canada, or to schedule interviews with members of the Alliance, please contact:

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To download a copy of the Framework, please visit www.arthritisalliance.ca.

References

¹ The Impact of Arthritis in Canada. Today and over the Next 30 Years.

http://www.arthritisalliance.ca/docs/20111022_2200_impact_of_arthritis.pdf