

JointHealthTM insight

Arthritis research, education and advocacy news : February 2025

A meeting of minds: Rheumatologists, researchers, arthritis health professionals and people with arthritis to meet in Calgary

The 2025 Canadian Rheumatology Association (CRA) Annual Scientific Meeting is taking place in Calgary on February 26 – March 1 and Arthritis Consumer Experts will be reporting from the conference sharing highlights for Canadians living with arthritis. In conjunction with the annual meeting, the Arthritis Health Professions Association (AHPA) will also hold its 17th annual Pre-Course designed to deliver specialized training and education and updates on advances in arthritis care.

In this edition of JointHealthTM insight, we take a closer look at these two leading arthritis organizations and the role they play in improving the care and treatment for people with arthritis.

The role and significance of the CRA for people with arthritis

The **Canadian Rheumatology Association** is the leading professional organization for rheumatologists in Canada. Focused on advancing the science and practice of rheumatology, the CRA plays an instrumental role in improving arthritis patient care through education, research, advocacy, and the establishment of clinical standards. For the over 6 million Canadians living with arthritis, the CRA's efforts lead to improved access to specialized care, enhanced treatment options, and a stronger voice for patient needs within the healthcare system.



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The CRA's commitment to education ensures that rheumatologists, researchers, arthritis health professionals, and patients stay informed about the latest scientific advancements and clinical practices in the field. The CRA's annual scientific meeting serves as a platform for sharing research findings, discussing best practices, and fostering collaboration among health care providers. The 2025 CRA annual meeting theme - *Ascending to New Heights: Peaks of Innovation in Rheumatology* – reflects its ongoing work advancing the latest advancements and breakthroughs in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of arthritis.

The CRA annual meeting also places a strong emphasis on patient-centered innovation. Sessions dedicated to new therapies, digital health technologies, and personalized medicine provide attendees with actionable insights that directly enhance patient outcomes. For people with arthritis, this translates to improved treatment options, faster integration of research findings into clinical practice, and a focus on tailored care plans.

A closer look at the CRA

Setting standards for excellence in arthritis care

The CRA develops clinical practice **guidelines** that define the standard of care for people with arthritis across Canada. These guidelines are based on rigorous scientific research and expert consensus, ensuring that rheumatologists and other health care providers deliver consistent, high-quality care. For patients, these guidelines translate into improved diagnosis and treatment pathways, including recommendations for early intervention, medication management, and long-term disease monitoring.

For instance, the CRA's guidelines on the use of biologics (originators and biosimilars) have been pivotal in optimizing treatment for patients with inflammatory arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, and psoriatic arthritis. These recommendations help ensure that patients receive effective therapies tailored to their unique needs.

Advancing research to improve treatment

The CRA supports and, through the CRA Foundation, funds research initiatives aimed at uncovering new insights into

arthritis and related diseases through clinical trials investigating new advanced therapies to studies examining the long-term outcomes of existing treatments.

For people with arthritis, this research means access to cutting-edge treatments and a deeper understanding of their disease. The CRA also collaborates with patient organizations to involve individuals living with arthritis in research design and implementation, ensuring that studies address real-world challenges and priorities.

Empowering rheumatologists and patients

When rheumatologists are equipped with the most current knowledge and skills, they can offer more effective and personalized care. The CRA's partnerships with Arthritis Consumer Experts and other patient groups help share valuable educational resources to individuals living with arthritis, empowering them to take charge of their health. By supporting patient education initiatives, the CRA helps individuals better understand their disease, treatment options, and self-care practices. Educational resources and tools provided by the CRA, for example, enable rheumatologists and patients to monitor symptoms, adhere to treatment plans, and make informed lifestyle changes that complement medical interventions.

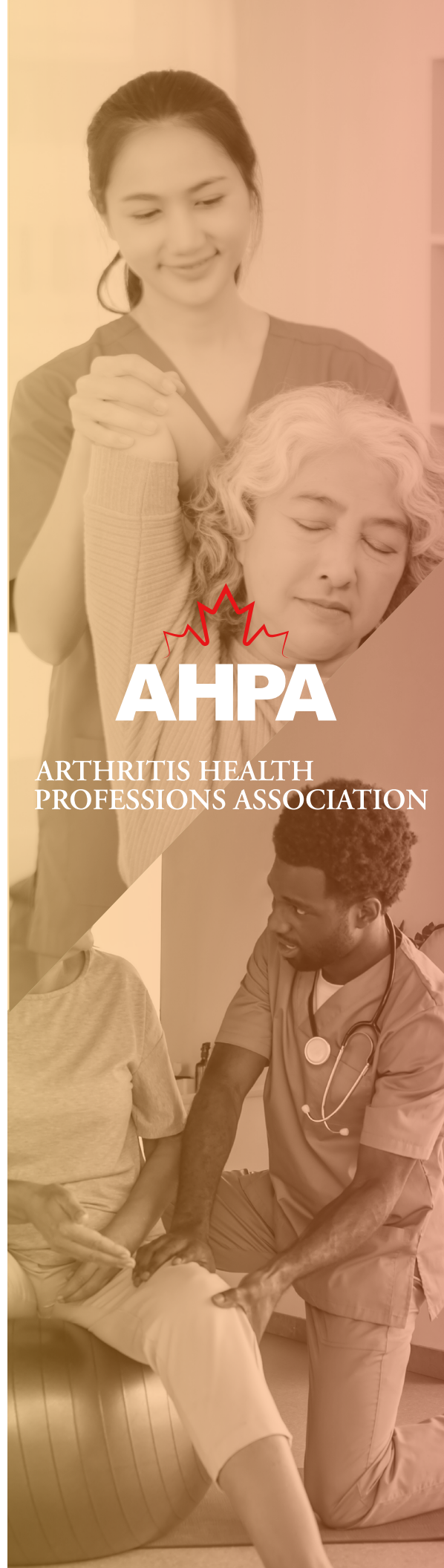
Addressing health inequities

The CRA advocates for policies that improve access to care and address systemic barriers within the healthcare system. The CRA shares similar public policy priorities and works with Arthritis Consumer Experts and other patient groups, government agencies, and healthcare organizations to reduce wait times, improve reimbursement access to medications, increase the number of practicing rheumatologists, and secure funding for arthritis research.

This advocacy is especially critical for addressing disparities in care. For example, the CRA highlights the need for equitable access to arthritis care for Indigenous and rural and remote communities and other underserved populations, ensuring that all patients receive timely and appropriate care.

The AHPA annual Pre-Course

The **Arthritis Health Professions Association** (AHPA) is dedicated to improving the quality of life for individuals living with arthritis. Founded to bring together a diverse group of health



AHPA

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PROFESSIONS ASSOCIATION



professionals (physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurse practitioners, dietitians, chiropractors, and social workers), the AHPA fosters a team-based collaborative approach to arthritis care, encouraging arthritis professionals from diverse fields to share insights and develop comprehensive care plans that address the complexities of arthritis.

In conjunction with the CRA annual scientific meeting, the AHPA holds an annual Pre-Course, focussed on education and updates on advances in arthritis care. Over the years, the Pre-Course has provided an in-depth exploration of emerging research, practical skill-building sessions, and interactive opportunities to discuss complex case studies. By addressing specific topics like advanced therapeutic techniques, patient communication strategies, and interdisciplinary care coordination, the Pre-Course provides attendees with the latest in rehabilitation techniques, pain management strategies, patient engagement practices and research updates.

Additionally, the AHPA Pre-Course sessions have included patient testimonials and panel discussions that emphasize the lived experiences of individuals with arthritis and help promote more personalized and empathetic care and better coordination among a patient's healthcare team.

What you should know about AHPA

Interdisciplinary collaboration: A foundation for comprehensive care

Osteoarthritis and inflammatory arthritis are complex diseases that affect not only the joints but also mental health, physical functionality, and social well-being. By encouraging collaboration across professions, the AHPA ensures that health care providers understand and address the many different needs of people with arthritis. For example, a patient managing rheumatoid arthritis may benefit from both physiotherapy to improve mobility and social work support to navigate workplace accommodations—an integrative approach championed by the AHPA.

Supporting patient self-care

By providing educational tools and collaborating with other health care professionals, AHPA members help patients build the knowledge and confidence needed to manage pain, maintain mobility, and improve overall quality of life.

Many AHPA members collaborate with patient advocacy organizations, such as Arthritis Consumer Experts, to develop accessible resources that empower individuals to take an active role in managing their condition, including topics such as exercise programs, stress management, and joint protection techniques. These resources help patients understand their diagnosis, treatment options, and the importance of lifestyle changes like exercise and nutrition.

Driving systemic change

AHPA advocates for systemic changes to improve arthritis treatment and patient outcomes. The organization works with policymakers, healthcare institutions, and other stakeholders to promote policies that enhance access to care, reduce wait times for specialist appointments, and secure funding for arthritis research. For patients, this advocacy helps remove barriers to timely and effective care, ensuring they receive the support they need when they need it.

Northern Ontario Model of Arthritis Care Model

The AHPA has partnered with the **Ontario Rheumatology Association** (ORA) on a program to improve models of arthritis care in Northern Ontario. The “hub-and-spoke” care model features Advanced Clinical Practitioner in Arthritis Care-trained extended role practitioners (ACPAC ERPs), based in core northern communities, providing in-person rheumatological care, centralized triage, and virtual consultation in partnership with affiliated rheumatologists across southern Ontario. After a successful pilot project, the ORA and AHPA have received government funding to implement the model in Thunder Bay and North Bay, involving hospital administrators, a newly trained ACPAC, visiting rheumatologists and those who consult virtually. The ORA and AHPA are now working on Phase 4 of the ACPAC Project, which will expand the hub and spoke model to other northern regions of the province.

ACE is your link to the highlights of the CRA annual scientific meeting

Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE) plans to host its 11th annual #CRArthritis event at the Calgary meeting, building on the tremendous success of our previous Facebook/X Live Events at the Canadian Rheumatology Association / Arthritis Health Professional Association annual meetings in Canada.





Arthritis Consumer Experts' digital platform, **Arthritis Broadcast Network** (ABN), will be airing interviews with Canada's leading rheumatologists, researchers, patient advocates, and arthritis health care professionals on our ABN YouTube, Facebook and X pages throughout February and March. Arthritis Broadcast Network is Canada's largest patient-led arthritis news outlet, featuring the latest arthritis news and patient education and has the most videos and views on a Canadian YouTube arthritis channel. All interviews will be published on the ABN YouTube, Facebook, and X pages, using the hashtag #CRArthritis.

#CRArthritis impact

Increased access to expert knowledge and cutting-edge research:

The #CRArthritis Event and Speaker Series will provide real-time access to some of the leading voices in arthritis care, including rheumatologists, researchers, and patient advocates. By sharing on its social media platforms, ABN will ensure that valuable insights and clinical advancements reach a broad audience, including people who may not have access to specialized rheumatology care. #CRArthritis will help level up people with arthritis who will be better informed about the latest treatment options, research findings, and strategies for managing their arthritis, leading to improved self-advocacy and health outcomes.

Multidisciplinary collaboration in arthritis care:

The #CRArthritis Event will bring together experts from various disciplines to discuss topics such as advanced therapies, patient-clinician partnerships, and patient-centered approaches to care. It will promote a multidisciplinary understanding of arthritis for people with arthritis and improve shared care practices with their healthcare team.

How you can get involved in #CRArthritis

Our public audience is encouraged to actively participate through likes, shares, reposts, and most importantly, posting comments and questions during the interviews. You can also show your support by following our social media:

- **Facebook**
- **X**
- **YouTube**

If you are a researcher, health care professional, patient advocate, professor, scientist, or student presenting or attending the CRA & AHPA annual scientific meeting, please email us at feedback@jointhealth.org to book your interview!

Special thanks to the CRA and AHPA for including our event at their annual meeting.



Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE)

Who we are

Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE) and its team members acknowledge that they gather and work on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples - x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwx-wú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwəta?/ Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

ACE operates as a non-profit and provides free research based education and information to Canadians with arthritis. We help (em)power people living with all forms of arthritis to take control of their disease and to take action in healthcare and research decision making. ACE activities are guided by its members and led by people with arthritis, scientific and medical experts on the ACE Advisory Board. To learn more about ACE, visit www.jointhehealth.org.

Guiding Principles

Healthcare is a human right. Those in healthcare, especially those who stand to gain from the ill health of others, have a moral responsibility to examine what they do, its long-term consequences and to ensure that all may benefit. The support of this should be shared by government, citizens, and non-profit and for-profit organizations. This is not only equitable, but is the best means to balance the influence of any specific constituency and a practical necessity. Any amount remaining from our annual budget at year end remains with ACE and is used to support the following year's core programs to continue helping Canadians living with arthritis.

For its past 20 years, ACE has consistently honored a commitment to its members and subscribers, academic and healthcare professional colleagues, collaborators, government and the public that its work is free from the influence of its funders.

To inform ACE employees and our stakeholders, members, subscribers that we will operate our organization with integrity and abide by the highest standards of lawful and ethical behaviour, ACE has adopted this strict set of guiding principles:

- ACE requests grants from private and public organizations to support its core program and plans and allocates those funds free from influence;
- ACE discloses all funding sources in all its activities;
- ACE does not promote any “brand”, product or program on any of its materials or its website, or during any of its educational programs or activities.
- ACE employees do not receive equity interest or personal “in-kind” support of any kind from any health-related organization;
- ACE identifies the source of all materials or documents used;
- ACE develops positions on health policy, products or services in collaboration with people living with arthritis, academic research community, health care providers and governments free from concern or constraint of its funders or other organizations; ACE employees do not engage in personal activities with its funders;
- Cheryl Koehn does not own stock or any financial interest in any of its private or public funders.

Thanks

ACE thanks Arthritis Research Canada (ARC) for its scientific review of all ACE and JointHealth™ materials.



Disclosures

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Disclaimer

The material contained in this publication should not be relied on to suggest a course of treatment for a particular individual or as a substitute for consultation with qualified health professionals who are familiar with your individual medical needs. Please contact your physician for your own health care related questions.

ACE Arthritis
Consumer
Experts

#210 - 1529 West 6th Avenue
Vancouver BC V6J 1R1
t: 604.974.1366

feedback@jointhehealth.org
www.jointhehealth.org

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