

National Arthritis Awareness Program Launches Phase Two: Reaching Out to Primary Care Physicians

Although arthritis is among the top three chronic diseases in Canada, it continues to be vastly misunderstood. Many perceive it as an “older person’s disease.” The fact is that 60% of the nearly 4.5 million Canadians with arthritis are under age 65. And, to many people’s surprise, one in 1,000 children in Canada has arthritis.

In the fall of 2009, Arthritis Consumer Experts and The Arthritis Society launched a National Arthritis Awareness Program (NAAP) across Canada to inform the public about arthritis. As part of the NAAP, the arthritis community “hit the streets” in Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax to share information about the “Arthritis is cured! (if you want it)” program. With the help of volunteer “Ambassadors”, we distributed over 100,000 informational brochures aimed to debunk myths and change Canadians’ perceptions of the effects arthritis has on our communities, our families, and our lives.

Informing the public is, however, only one side of the equation. Out of four years of medical school training, a family physician receives only about 17 hours of training on the over 100 different types of arthritis and related diseases, which may mean it will be difficult for some patients to get a referral to a rheumatologist. Arthritis diagnosis and management begins with Canadian primary care practitioners. To assist them with the diagnosis and management of arthritis and in discussing arthritis with their patients, the NAAP is now focusing on engaging primary care professionals by providing them with a “point-of-practice” tool to help them efficiently and effectively identify and treat arthritis.



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An arthritis “point-of-practice” tool designed specifically for physicians, by physicians

Early diagnosis and appropriate management strategies are vitally important when dealing with all forms of arthritis to help prevent joint damage and keep people healthy, to reduce pain in the presence of arthritis, and to lessen the threat of permanent disability. To aid physicians with diagnosing and managing their patients' arthritis, the National Arthritis Awareness Program's co-leaders, Arthritis Consumer Experts and The Arthritis Society, have developed a practical, arthritis point-of-practice tool which can be used in a physician's daily practice.

The content for this tool comes from the evidence-based Best Practice Guidelines for arthritis developed by and for primary care providers as part of the “Getting a Grip on Arthritis” program (© The Arthritis Society).

Digital versions of this invaluable arthritis point-of-practice tool are available in two sizes (in both French and English) and can be downloaded from our website, at www.arthritisiscured.org/resources/professional. Alternatively, copies of this tool can be ordered by email. Please contact us at info@arthritisiscured.org.

For the national arthritis awareness program to be successful your support, as part of the Canadian arthritis community, is important.

Definitions:

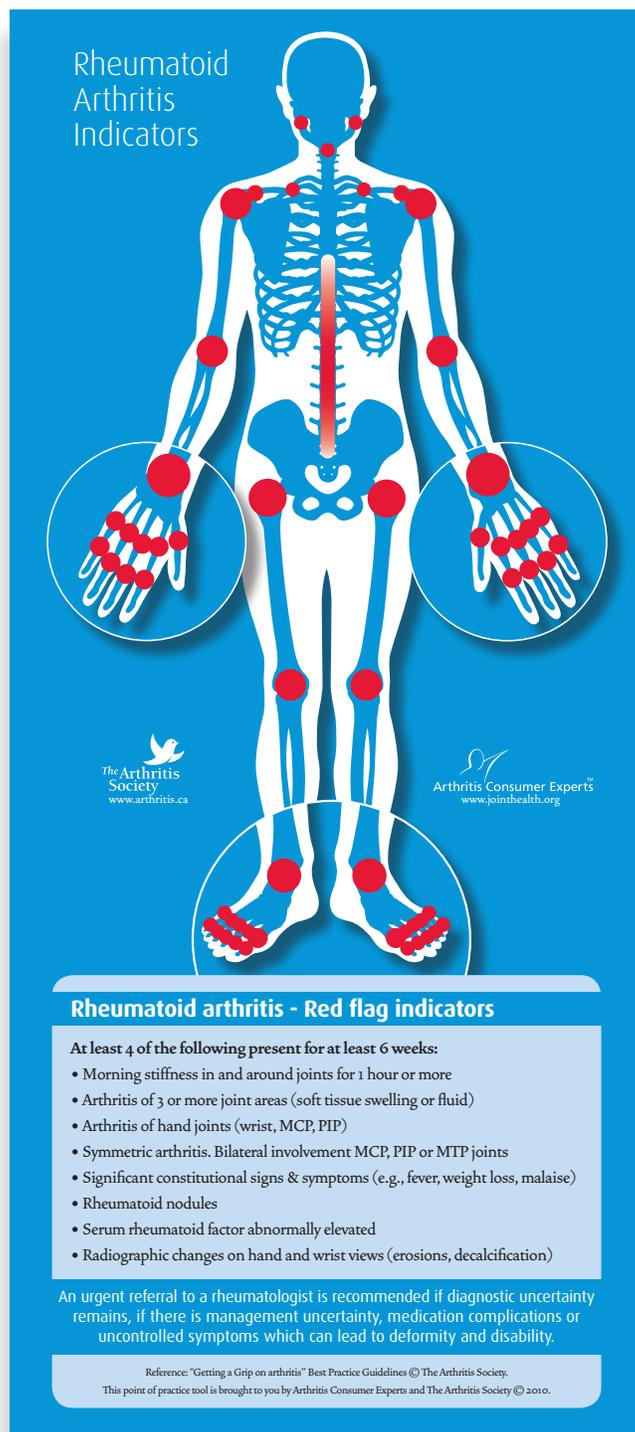
Ambassadors: Volunteers who represented the NAAP during phase one by being a presence on the streets and handing out brochures to get the word out about arthritis.

NAAP: National Arthritis Awareness Program, a joint effort of The Arthritis Society and Arthritis Consumer Experts to educate the public about the prevalence of arthritis and to provide a tool for doctors to help them diagnose and treat arthritis before the disease results in deformity and disability.

Point-of-practice tool: A diagram indicating “hot spots” and a list of symptoms for both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis – a practical tool, which incorporates evidence-based information to support arthritis diagnosis and management and can be used in a physician's daily practice.

Primary healthcare provider: Family physician.

Rheumatologist: Arthritis specialist.



Rheumatoid Arthritis Indicators

Rheumatoid arthritis - Red flag indicators

At least 4 of the following present for at least 6 weeks:

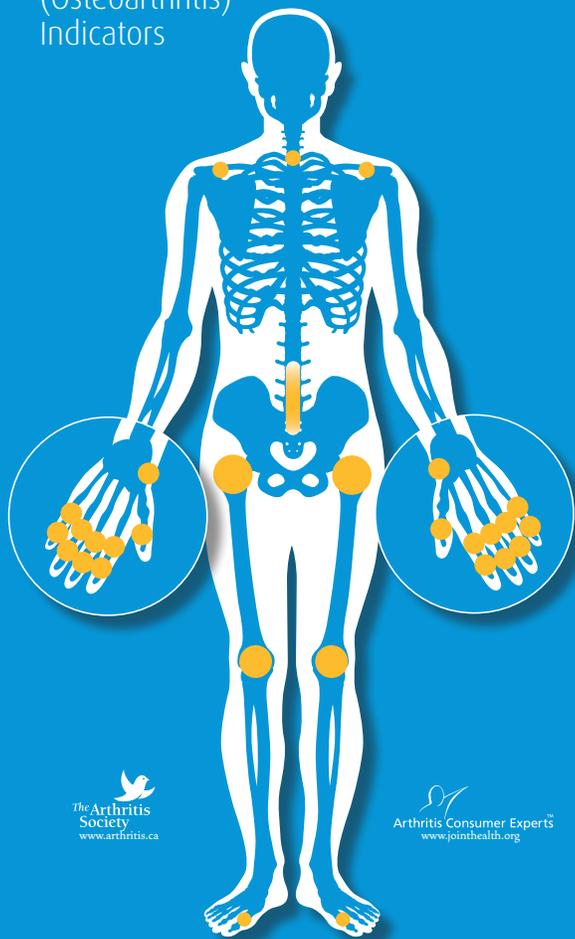
- Morning stiffness in and around joints for 1 hour or more
- Arthritis of 3 or more joint areas (soft tissue swelling or fluid)
- Arthritis of hand joints (wrist, MCP, PIP)
- Symmetric arthritis. Bilateral involvement MCP, PIP or MTP joints
- Significant constitutional signs & symptoms (e.g., fever, weight loss, malaise)
- Rheumatoid nodules
- Serum rheumatoid factor abnormally elevated
- Radiographic changes on hand and wrist views (erosions, decalcification)

An urgent referral to a rheumatologist is recommended if diagnostic uncertainty remains, if there is management uncertainty, medication complications or uncontrolled symptoms which can lead to deformity and disability.

Reference: "Getting a Grip on arthritis" Best Practice Guidelines © The Arthritis Society.
This point of practice tool is brought to you by Arthritis Consumer Experts and The Arthritis Society © 2010.

An arthritis point-of-practice tool, information, posters, brochures and other useful materials are available for download on our website at www.arthritisiscured.org Materials are available in French and English

Degenerative Arthritis (Osteoarthritis) Indicators



The Arthritis Society
www.arthritis.ca

Arthritis Consumer Experts
www.joinhealth.org

Degenerative arthritis (Osteoarthritis) - Red flag indicators

- History of significant trauma
- Acute severe pain
- Neurogenic pain or claudication pain pattern
- Focal or diffuse muscle weakness
- Hot and swollen joints

Referral to other health professionals, such as a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist or an orthopaedic surgeon may be necessary to best manage a patient with degenerative arthritis.

Reference: "Getting a Grip on arthritis" Best Practice Guidelines © The Arthritis Society.
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Arthritis is cured!
(if you want it)



Arthritis affects 1 out of 6 Canadian adults. There are more than 100 types of arthritis. Don't take "no cure" for an answer. Visit ArthritisIsCured.org to learn more.

ArthritisIsCured.org

Getting involved

Today, there is no known cure for arthritis, but we believe a cure can and will be found if Canadians start talking about arthritis. Our message to Canadians is "Arthritis is cured! (if you want it)". For more information on this awareness program please visit www.arthritisiscured.org.

If you have an interest in becoming involved or to receive more information about the program send an email to info@arthritisiscured.org. The nearly 4.5 million Canadians living with arthritis deserve our best efforts and support.

Here are some simple steps you, your friends, family, and colleagues can take to make a difference and sustain our program's momentum:

- The next time you see your doctor or other member of your healthcare team tell them that they can find resources and a practical, point-of-practice tool designed for healthcare professionals, at www.arthritisiscured.org/resources/professional or download a copy of the tool and bring it with you. Or, let them know they can order copies of the tool by sending an e-mail with their name and mailing address to info@arthritisiscured.org
- Distribute materials in your community and workplace and spread the word. You can contact us to get brochures, or download these materials from the Resource Kit section of our website to print in either colour or black and white.
- Share the video, created to help raise awareness about arthritis, available on www.arthritisiscured.org with your family, friends, and colleagues.
- Become a fan on our "Arthritis is cured! (if you want it)" Facebook page - tell your network about the significance of finding a cure for arthritis and encourage others to become a fan.
- Send an email from the website to tell someone about the "Arthritis is cured! (if you want it)" program and get the message out about the need for all Canadians to help find a cure for this devastating disease.
- Display an "Arthritis is cured! (if you want it)" poster in your workplace or in other locations throughout your community. Posters can be downloaded from the Resource Kit section of our website in colour or black and white.
- Help us find a cure by donating to arthritis research and encouraging others to do so as well.
- Email or write to us to learn more or to let us know how you would like to help:

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We hope you will participate in and support this ambitious and unprecedented program for arthritis awareness in Canada.

Arthritis Consumer Experts

Who we are

Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE) provides research-based education, advocacy training, advocacy leadership and information to Canadians with arthritis. We help empower 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, leading medical professionals and the ACE Advisory Board. To learn more about ACE, visit

www.jointhehealth.org

Guiding principles and acknowledgement

Guiding Principles

Health care is a human right. Those in health care, 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 profit from our activities is re-invested in our core programs for Canadians with arthritis.

To completely insulate the agenda, the activities, and the judgments of our organization from those of organizations supporting our work, we put forth our abiding principles:

- ACE only requests unrestricted grants from private and public organizations to support its core program.
- ACE employees do not receive equity interest or personal "in-kind" support of any kind from any health-related organization.
- ACE discloses all funding sources in all its activities.
- ACE identifies the source of all materials or documents used.
- ACE develops positions on health policy, products or services in collaboration with arthritis consumers, the academic community and health care providers and government free from concern or constraint of other organizations.
- ACE employees do not engage in any personal social activities with supporters.
- ACE does not promote any "brand", product or program on any of its materials or its web site, or during any of its educational programs or activities.

Thanks

ACE thanks the Arthritis Research Centre of Canada (ARC) for its scientific review of JointHealth™.



Acknowledgement

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Disclaimer

The material contained in this newsletter is provided for general information only. It 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. Should you have any health care related questions or concerns, you should contact your physician. You should never disregard medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this or any newsletter. ¶


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