

The Impact of Arthritis: British Columbia

The Human Story

Approximately 700,000 voters in B.C., 15% of adults in British Columbia, report arthritis in Canadian Health Surveys. Arthritis affects more women than men and 57% of people with arthritis are 64 years or younger.

B.C.'s aging population combined with other factors mean that, by 2040, one in four British Columbians, an estimated 1 million adults, will join the ranks of those living with arthritis.

Osteoarthritis (OA) in British Columbia

Approximately 650,000 people – or 1 in 7 – are living with Osteoarthritis (OA). Within a generation (30 years) it is anticipated that 1 in 4 or 1.49 million British Columbians will be living with OA and one person in British Columbia will be diagnosed every 8.8 minutes.

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) in British Columbia

Unlike OA, Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) can occur at any age. In 2010, 45,000 people in British Columbia were living with RA. The prevalence of RA is expected to rise by 80 per cent by 2030. In 2040, more than 80,000 people– or 1 in 71 people in British Columbia – will be living with RA; one person in British Columbia will be diagnosed with RA every 2.6 hours.

Economic Impact

Arthritis is the most common cause of work disability in Canada, resulting in both poor quality of life and workplace limitations. While employees living with arthritis are able to contribute mentally, their joints are in severe pain and they are likely to leave the workforce earlier than planned, including going on disability (18% within five years after diagnosis and 27% within 10 years after diagnosis).

Other studies have clearly shown that the cost of being present, but less productive, is higher than the cost of being absent, with a workforce survey showing the cost was four times higher than the cost of missed days from work.