

NEW REPORT INDICATES ARTHRITIS IS A \$33 BILLION BURDEN ON CANADIANS

Arthritis Alliance of Canada Calls for Governments, Healthcare Communities to Work Together

Quebec City, Quebec (October 27, 2011) – Although it has been described as an invisible disease, the impact of arthritis on the Canadian economy can't be ignored. A new report from the Arthritis Alliance of Canada (AAC) estimates that osteoarthritis (OA) – the most prevalent form of the disease – and rheumatoid arthritis (RA) costs the Canadian economy \$33 billion through (direct) healthcare expenses and (indirect) lost productivity and taxes. Three years in the making, [*The Impact of Arthritis in Canada: Today and Over the Next 30 Years*](#) provides a detailed look at the impact of arthritis and offers solutions on how to mitigate and manage the situation.

The report reveals many surprising findings about the prevalence of arthritis in Canada now and in the future, and the overall cost of the disease to the healthcare system, including:

- There are currently more than 4.4 million people living with OA. **In 30 years, more than 10 million or one in four Canadians is expected to have OA.** Within a generation (in 30 years), there will be a new diagnosis of OA every 60 seconds.
- There are currently more than **272,000 people living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), comprising 0.9% of the Canadian adult population, which will increase to 1.3% over the next 30 years.**
- At present:
 - Arthritis drives **\$12.6 billion in direct healthcare costs** (\$10.2 billion for OA; \$2.4 billion for RA) which represents healthcare expenses
 - Arthritis drives **\$20.6 billion in indirect healthcare costs** (\$17.3 billion for OA; \$3.3 billion for RA) which represents lost productivity and taxes

Which means that based on 2010 data, **the burden of arthritis on the Canadian economy is \$33.2 billion** in direct and indirect healthcare costs. These numbers will only grow.

The report is being unveiled today at a scientific conference, in Quebec City, that brings together 400 members of the Canadian arthritis community who will spend the next two days discussing the findings of the *Impact* report as well as themes that include: the future of the arthritis community; inflammation in chronic diseases; the patient experience within complex disease management and care; epigenetics; rarer forms of arthritis; and, personalized medicine.

“The findings of this report will come as a shock to some in the arthritis community because the numbers are higher than what we’ve seen before,” explains Dr. Claire Bombardier, Co-Scientific Director of the Canadian Arthritis Network and one of the lead authors on the report. “Unveiling the report at the 2011 Annual Scientific Conference will allow the best minds in the arthritis community to grapple with the issues and work out how the community can move forward together to help patients, support government and alleviate the burden on the healthcare system.”

“Too many people dismiss arthritis as an old person’s disease,” says Dr. Dianne Mosher, Chair of the Arthritis Alliance of Canada and one of the lead authors on the report. “Canadians need to understand that these diseases are painful and debilitating. They can affect anyone, at any age. Arthritis is profoundly affecting individuals in our communities. Over the long-term, it will have a tremendous impact on our healthcare system, labour force and economy. This Report quantifies the very real personal and economic costs of arthritis and outlines some measurable actions we can take today to manage the impact tomorrow.”

The *Impact* report puts forward four potential arthritis interventions to mitigate the burden of the disease and manage the impact arthritis could have, if left unchecked, over the next three decades. Implementing these interventions is expected to save the healthcare system more than \$700 million over the next 30 years.

To respond to the findings in the report, the AAC is proposing a National Framework for Arthritis that will increase the efficiency of care and management of people living with the disease; implement effective measures to prevent disease onset; increase awareness of the full cost of arthritis to the individual and society; and, establish priorities for ongoing research.

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 20 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.

About the Canadian Arthritis Network

The Canadian Arthritis Network (CAN) is a not-for-profit organization, funded by the Government of Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence (www.nce.gc.ca), to support arthritis research and development and to facilitate the commercialization of its Network Investigators' discoveries. CAN is the single point of contact that links over 200 leading Canadian arthritis researchers and clinicians, 45 Canadian academic institutions, The Arthritis Society, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, and government.

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For more information about the Impact of Arthritis Report, the Arthritis Alliance of Canada, or to schedule interviews with Alliance members please contact:

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

For more information about the 2011 Annual Scientific Conference, please contact:

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