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## Preparations Underway for Groundbreaking Arthritis Summit

### Website launch begins countdown to “Rock This Joint”

OTTAWA (June 22, 2005) – With the launch of a new website, [arthritisalliance.ca](http://arthritisalliance.ca), Canada’s arthritis community is preparing to “Rock This Joint” in an unprecedented gathering of arthritis stakeholders, charting a new course for prevention and treatment of the disease.

“**Rock This Joint: Bringing Together Arthritis Knowledge and Action**” will culminate in the *Summit on Standards for Arthritis Prevention and Care*, taking place at Ottawa’s Chateau Laurier November 1-3, 2005. Participants will include leading researchers, caregivers and a large contingent of people with arthritis.

“This will be remembered as a significant milestone for Canadians with arthritis, as decades of research and evidence are translated into a definitive plan of action,” said Cheryl Koehn, a 15-year survivor of rheumatoid arthritis and a patient advocate who is one of four co-chairs for the Summit.

“We are committed to developing concrete, clear and definitive recommendations for government to ensure that arthritis is dealt with more effectively,” added co-chair Dr. John Esdaile. “These will be pragmatic, actionable standards, based on solid evidence and research.”

More than four million Canadians have arthritis, making it one of the three most common chronic diseases in the country. About 100,000 Canadians each year are diagnosed with arthritis, and in the next 20 years the number of Canadians with the disease is projected to reach six million. Each year, Canadians make nearly nine million physician visits for arthritis and related conditions.

To focus attention on standards for preventing and treating arthritis, approximately 250 participants from across the country will take part in the Summit. Delegates will be comprised of formal and informal care givers, health care providers, government (federal and provincial) representatives, arthritis researchers and clinicians, voluntary associations, the pharmaceutical industry, and people with arthritis.

“Never before has such a cross-section of arthritis stakeholders been in one place at one time – with one goal. We are bringing together the collective knowledge and commitment of the arthritis community, to consolidate thoughts and ideas, and to move forward cohesively and effectively,” said Summit co-chair Dr. Dianne Mosher.

In advance of the Summit, Standard Development Teams have been formed to provide a sound basis for deliberations at the Summit and beyond.

“We are determined to be realistic about setting standards, taking into consideration issues such as access, costs and quality of care – and to make recommendations for government, service providers and consumers,” said co-chair Dr. Gillian Hawker. “The Summit will also focus on identifying barriers to implementing the standards and developing solutions to overcome them.”

(more)

A Planning Committee of representatives from arthritis stakeholder organizations has been established to develop the format, structure and content for the Summit, and to determine the Summit's participants. More than ever before, people with arthritis will be strongly represented, in planning, attending and promoting the Summit, and in helping to shape its recommendations.

The Summit will be the culmination of "Rock This Joint 2005," an initiative that will see eight days of high-level arthritis meetings in Ottawa this fall. In addition to the Summit, "Rock This Joint" includes the Bone and Joint Decade World Network Conference (October 27-29) and the Canadian Arthritis Network's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Conference (October 29-31).

"Rock This Joint" is an initiative of the Alliance for the Canadian Arthritis Program (ACAP). ACAP was formed two years ago, when the organizations working to help people with arthritis live better lives joined together. More than 30 organizations are involved, and while each group continues its own work, ACAP provides a central focus for all arthritis-related initiatives.

Post-Summit, ACAP is committed to following through on the standards – continuing to work with government to ensure their implementation in the months and years ahead.

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