



FROM COAST TO COAST: Reports from Rheumatology Associations Across the Country

Canadian Arthritis Network

By Claire Bombardier, MD, FRCPC

If you ask a dozen arthritis stakeholders how the [Canadian Arthritis Network \(CAN\)](#) has influenced the rheumatology landscape in Canada and around the world, you will likely get a dozen different answers. However there will certainly be consensus that CAN's work has made a significant difference and that the Network's impending closing in March 2012, when government funding ends, will be a noticeable loss for the research community here and abroad.

CAN was launched in 1998 after a successful application to the [Networks of Centres of Excellence program](#). The Network's vision is "a world free of arthritis" and its mission is to cure arthritic diseases by supporting Canadian research and development, an encouraging collaboration between the major players in the arthritis community.

As the Co-Scientific Director of CAN, I believe, on a personal level, that CAN has been instrumental to people's careers through salary support, professional development, grants, commercialization and intellectual property advice, and the nurturing of a community. Its early focus on osteoarthritis (OA) research, empowering patients and driving consensus-based decision making have had a ripple effect throughout the research world.

A short list of CAN's influences and milestones include:

- breaking down the silos that existed between arthritis researchers and encouraging a collaborative approach;
- providing incentives and support to persuade trainees and basic scientists to choose arthritis as a focus for research;
- offering consumers the opportunity to have a voice in arthritis research and giving them resources to carry their message to an international audience;
- funding multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional research in the form of five-year Strategic Research Initiative

(SRI) grants in OA, Inflammatory Joint Diseases and Bioengineering for the Restoration of Joint Function;

- supporting the formation of instrumental organizations such as the [Canadian Rheumatology Research Consortium \(CRRC\)](#) and the [Arthritis Alliance of Canada \(AAC\)](#), as well as research groups such as the [Understanding Childhood Arthritis Network \(UCAN\)](#) and the [Canadian Consortium of Rheumatology Cohorts \(CANCoRC\)](#) and dozens more across the country; and,
- spearheading the development of a new report with the AAC that outlines the burden of arthritis in Canada today and over the next 30 years, and offers implementable solutions and strategies.

As for the future, CAN's training program will continue under the direction of The Arthritis Society and advocacy efforts to improve arthritis care are underway with – you guessed it – the participation of the entire community.

To receive a copy of CAN's legacy strategy or *The Impact of Arthritis in Canada: The Next 30 Years*, please write to: can@arthritisnetwork.ca. A video about the CAN Legacy can be viewed at:

http://www.arthritisnetwork.ca/video/legacydvd_en.php.

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