

Arthritis Alliance of Canada

By Michel Zimmer, MD, FRCPC

The Arthritis Alliance of Canada (formerly the Alliance for the Canadian Arthritis Program [ACAP]) was formed in 2002 to support people living with arthritis and find solutions to the challenges they face on a daily basis. Membership includes professional organizations (e.g., Canadian Rheumatology Association [CRA], Canadian Orthopedic Association [COA], Arthritis Health Professions Association [AHPA]), The Arthritis Society, patient groups, government agencies and industry partners. The executive is composed of Dr. Dianne Mosher (president and member-at-large), Steven McNair (The Arthritis Society), Dr. Claire Bombardier (Canadian Arthritis Network [CAN]), Jean Légaré (Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance [CAPA]) and myself, representing the CRA.

The Alliance and its partners have recently commissioned two important studies intended to help arthritis organizations and public policy advisors make strategic decisions to benefit the arthritis community and improve Canada's healthcare system. The *Canadian Arthritis Funding Landscape Review* summarizes Canada's strengths, needs, and challenges in arthritis research. The report is available on the Media page at www.arthritisnetwork.ca. In October, the Alliance will release *The Impact of Arthritis in Canada: The Next 30 Years* at CAN's Annual Scientific Conference in Quebec City, October 27-29, 2011. This report describes the burden of arthritis today and projects what it will be in 30 years. The report offers realistic solutions to mitigate the burden.

In addition to producing these strategic reports, the Alliance has also been hard at work developing a National Framework for Improving Pan-Canadian Co-operation and Co-ordination for Arthritis. The initiative has three components to it:

- 1) Advocacy & Awareness, led by Jean Légaré and Steven McNair, is designed to increase awareness of the burden of arthritis among policy makers and the public.
- 2) Research, led by Drs. Claire Bombardier and David Hart, will prioritize investments in arthritis research to support prevention and better care.

- 3) Models of Care, led by Drs. Cy Frank and Michel Zimmer, is designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of arthritis care and prevention.

The Research Working Group, together with the arthritis community, is taking the following approach to determine how to allocate scarce research dollars:

- Identify and prioritize gaps in our understanding of the burden, causes, prevention and management of arthritis in Canada;
- Identify and implement research strategies to address the established priorities; and
- Develop recommendations to federal/provincial/territorial policy makers and funders on a program of focused investments in arthritis research.

The objective of the Models of Care Working Group is to improve musculoskeletal (MSK) outcomes by setting a national strategy and standards for MSK models of care in order to provide the right care at the right time and place by the right team at the right cost. This would allow members of our community to be well-supported in advocating for and in influencing healthcare planning and funding for MSK diseases.

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