

**Arthritis is cured!**  
(if you want it)



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Arthritis is cured! (if you want it)**

**October 20, 2009** — With arthritis cases in Canada already at alarming levels and growing at unprecedented rates, the arthritis community is urging Canadians not to accept “no cure” as an answer.

Every day, millions still struggle with the more than 100 types of arthritis that exist, despite advances in research over the past two decades that have led to better treatments and hope for the future. In fact, arthritis is one of the top three chronic diseases in Canada, affecting one out of six Canadian adults.

In the journey towards a cure, Canadian researchers are conducting breakthrough studies in arthritis research. Here are some of the most recent notable projects:

- This past year, researchers discovered that a second gene, IL23R, is linked to the body’s response to inflammation. This discovery represents a major advance, and may result in the development of new treatments for the chronic inflammation of ankylosing spondylitis.
- Researchers are working to determine whether there is a link between the breakdown of bone following a joint injury and the onset of osteoarthritis. If this link is established, medications could be used to minimize bone loss to delay or even prevent the development of osteoarthritis.
- A research team is currently examining whether genetics and lifestyle factors (level of nutrition and physical activity, exposure to sunlight and smoke, social background, etc.) impact how juvenile arthritis progresses in a child. These findings could lead to improved treatments and, in some cases, prevent the occurrence of arthritis later in an individual’s life.

“It’s amazing the innovations our researchers have been able to achieve. When Canadians consider that arthritis affects 16% of the population – more adults than diabetes, cancer, heart disease, asthma or spinal cord trauma – but receives disproportionately less research funding than many other chronic diseases, they will realize more must be done,” says Steven McNair, President and CEO of The Arthritis Society.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research spent \$19 million – a comparatively small sum – on arthritis-related research in 2005-2006. That is about \$4.30 for every adult living with arthritis in Canada. For comparison, diabetes research receives about three times as much per person with diabetes, cancer research receives about 32 times as much and HIV-AIDS research receives about 139 times as much.

To start a national conversation about arthritis and how a cure is an achievable goal if researchers have the resources to accelerate pioneering work, the Canadian arthritis community is launching the “Arthritis is cured! (if you want it)” program.

“Why do we need a national awareness program? Because arthritis is the most misunderstood chronic disease in Canada today,” says Cheryl Koehn, a person with rheumatoid arthritis and President of Arthritis Consumer Experts. She adds: “There are 4.5 million people like me in Canada. As a result of

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developing arthritis, we live with daily pain, disability, fear, and social isolation. We fill hospital beds and emergency rooms across the country. What Canadians need to understand is that arthritis affects people of all ages and can be devastating, debilitating and fatal.”

Perceived by many as an ‘old person’s’ disease, 60% of Canadians with arthritis are under age 65. And, to many people’s surprise, one in 1,000 children in Canada has arthritis. The impact of arthritis on our communities is dramatic. Arthritis costs more than \$4.4 billion annually in health-care expenses and lost work days.

A key message of the “Arthritis is cured! (if you want it) program is that sustained research efforts can dramatically help Canadians manage their condition and reduce these burdensome social costs of arthritis.

“With enough resources, Canadian researchers and scientists can move that much closer to developing effective treatments and discovering the underlying causes of arthritis, which are the necessary steps for finding a cure,” says Dr. John Matyas, Chair of The Arthritis Society’s Scientific Advisory Committee.

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#### **About the “Arthritis is cured! (if you want it) Program**

Arthritis affects nearly 4.5 adult Canadians. To address the critical need to raise awareness of arthritis, the arthritis community, led by Arthritis Consumer Experts and The Arthritis Society, has launched the “Arthritis is cured! (if you want it)” program. During 2009 and 2010, the arthritis community is distributing information about arthritis and raising awareness of this serious disease. This 12-month national program will offer resources, screenings, support and information to Canadians. For more information about arthritis and the national program, please visit [www.ArthritisIsCured.org](http://www.ArthritisIsCured.org).

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