

Title: Consumer Impact on Arthritis Research

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Purpose: To demonstrate the value of consumer involvement in arthritis research.

Methods: The Canadian Arthritis Network (CAN) supports integrated, multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional research and training. Consumers (people living with arthritis) on CAN's Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) have extensive advocacy and self-management experience, and represent a range of professions, ages, cultures, and languages. Consumers work with researchers to shape research initiatives. CAC impacts research through membership on committees and integration into CAN's governance structure, collaborating and advising on research projects, participating in training activities and engaging in knowledge translation and exchange.

Results: Numerous outcomes demonstrate consumer impact on research:

1)Committee membership: There is a consumer observer on CAN's Board of Directors, and voting members on CAN's Research Management Committee, Scientific and Medical Advisory Committee, and Training and Education Committee.

2)Collaborate on research projects: Consumers collaborate on research participating in team meetings, supplying expert advice on project relevance to consumers projects and by disseminating and communicating results.

3)Participate in training activities of consumers and researchers: Consumers educate their peers through provision of training sessions. They increase awareness for consumer involvement in research through interaction with local consumers and policy makers, and through presentations to both the public and groups of researchers.

4)Participate in knowledge translation and exchange activities: Consumers have introduced fatigue and pain as topics of research at CAN, utilized connections with other arthritis organizations to disseminate the CAN research model, written papers on consumer involvement in research, and given presentations at scientific conferences and workshops..

Conclusions: Consumer research-related activities are interactive and mutually beneficial. Researchers and trainees are educated on the importance of the perspective of those living with arthritis in their research, and consumers gain new knowledge, skills, and empowerment through their research-related activities.