

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Canadians help develop new guidelines for juvenile arthritis treatment

March 30, 2011 (Toronto, ON) – Several Canadian pediatric rheumatologists and health professionals played a prominent role in developing new guidelines for treating juvenile arthritis (JA). Released today by the American College of Rheumatology (ACR), the guidelines will likely be used by rheumatologists around the world.

The guidelines are the first of their kind and are most notable for endorsing the use of biologic medications in the treatment plans for someone with JA.

Among the Canadian rheumatologists contributing to the international team responsible for the guidelines are:

- Ronald M. Laxer, MDCM, FRCPC, University of Toronto and The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto.
- Ciaran M. Duffy, MBBCh MSc, McGill University, Montreal.
- Rayfel Schneider, MBBCh FRCPC, University of Toronto and The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto.
- Earl D. Silverman, MD FRCPC, University of Toronto and The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto.

“Research has shown that early diagnosis and targeted treatment are vital to ensuring that a child with juvenile arthritis has an active and productive life,” says Dr. Ronald Laxer, a pediatric rheumatologist at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and one of the contributors to the guidelines. “These guidelines will be an invaluable evidence-based tool that will help health-care providers deliver the best treatment for their patients.”

Juvenile arthritis affects about one in 1,000 Canadians under the age of 16, making it one of the most prevalent chronic diseases among babies, toddlers, children and young adults in this country. JA results from a malfunctioning of the body’s immune system. The immune system fails to recognize healthy body tissue and attacks it. Symptoms include excruciating pain and inflammation in the joints. The pain of the disease can prevent children with JA from participating in regular childhood activities, like sports, recreation and attending school. Depending on the severity of the arthritis, some children experience irregular growth or physical disability.

“Today’s announcement marks an exciting advancement in juvenile arthritis care and shows yet again that Canada is a global leader in arthritis research,” says Steven McNair, President and CEO of The Arthritis Society. “It’s worth noting that the work of at least four of the guideline’s authors was at some point funded by The Arthritis Society. This is a wonderful example of how our contributions can make a critical difference in the search for improved treatments and an ultimate cure for arthritis.”

The Society is currently funding a National Research Initiative into juvenile arthritis. This major project brings together more than 50 collaborators from 12 medical centres across Canada. These scientists are examining whether genetics, lifestyle and physical environment can help predict juvenile arthritis outcomes, such as the amount of joint damage and diminished quality of life.

The new guidelines will be published in the April issue of *Arthritis Care & Research*, the official journal of the American College of Rheumatology. To view the complete news release issued today by the ACR, please visit www.rheumatology.org.

About The Arthritis Society

The Arthritis Society is Canada’s principal health charity empowering the more than four million Canadians with arthritis to live their lives to the fullest by combating the daily limitations of arthritis. In the last 60 years, The Society has invested more than \$170 million in arthritis research to develop better treatments and, ultimately, find a cure.

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