



Backgrounder on the Alliance for the Canadian Arthritis Program
June 2008

The Alliance for the Canadian Arthritis Program (ACAP) brings together over 20 arthritis stakeholder groups to support individuals living with arthritis. Since 2003, ACAP members have contributed expertise and resources to collectively find new solutions to the challenges they face every day. The Canadian Arthritis Network (CAN) is a founding member of ACAP and provides financial and administrative support in its endeavours.

Member Organizations

- Arthritis Community Research & Evaluation Unit
- Arthritis Consumer Experts
- Arthritis Health Professions Association
- Arthritis Research Centre of Canada
- Canadian Arthritis Network
- Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance
- Canadian Rheumatology Association
- Cochrane Collaboration
- Consumer Advisory Board of the Arthritis Research Centre of Canada
- Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis
- Patient Partners in Arthritis
- The Arthritis Society

Member Companies

- Abbott Laboratories Inc.
- Amgen Canada Inc.
- Merck Frosst Canada Ltd.
- Pfizer Canada Inc.
- Roche Canada
- Schering Canada Inc.
- Wyeth Pharmaceuticals

ACAP is committed to:

- making every Canadian aware of arthritis and its impact
- increasing funding for research and improving the conduct of research in Canada
- improving access to healthcare and education for people living with arthritis
- advocating for arthritis awareness at the federal level

Summit on Standards for Arthritis Prevention and Care

Held in November 2005, the summit offered a unique and unprecedented platform for collective knowledge and experience to be translated into Standards for Arthritis Prevention and Care. Three priorities for immediate action were identified: that every Canadian be aware of arthritis; that all relevant health professionals be able to perform a valid, standardized, age-appropriate musculoskeletal screening assessment; and that every Canadian with arthritis have timely and equal access to appropriate treatment and medications.

Activities to Further Summit Priorities

The formal launch of the Summit report took place in the spring of 2006 and involved a cross-Canada media blitz and a mail out campaign to all key contacts in the federal and provincial governments.

In November of 2006, an initiative entitled "Arthritis 101" was held on Parliament Hill. Members of Parliament and the Senate were invited for breakfast and received a presentation on arthritis and a demonstration of arthritis screening. Considerable media coverage ensued, as was also the case with parallel initiatives (sponsored by ACAP) undertaken in provincial capitals.

Efforts at raising awareness continued with ACAP co-chairs and member organizations conducting a series of targeted one-on-one meetings with Members of Parliament and key officials. These initiatives took place in late fall 2006, spring 2007 and early 2008.

Senate Inquiry

Engaging Canada's senators began with Arthritis 101 and became a stand-alone initiative for ACAP in 2007 when the co-chairs approached Senator Gerald Comeau to be a champion for the arthritis cause. Subsequently, Senator Comeau introduced a Senate Inquiry on Arthritis and, from November 2007 until February 2008, eleven senators have spoken about the need for more arthritis awareness, more prevention and treatment strategies, and increased research into the disease. Senator Wilbert Keon will make the decision as to whether an inquiry will go forward and the ACAP Steering Committee will strongly encourage him to do so.

Governance

Steering Committee

To follow up on recommendations from the 2005 summit, an ACAP Steering Committee was established. The committee includes one representative per member and the co-chairs are elected annually by the committee.

Government Relations Committee

A Government Relations Committee was established in March 2007. It is comprised of at least one of the Steering Committee co-chairs, an Arthritis Society representative and another member approved by the Steering Committee (the Canadian Arthritis Network was accepted as the third member). At the October 2007 Steering Committee meeting, a consumer representative was added and a representative from industry was identified to provide ad hoc advice. This committee will lead government relations efforts on behalf of ACAP and will keep members informed of their activities, progress and responses from the government.

By-laws Committee

A By-laws Committee has been established to facilitate the incorporation of ACAP, an initiative that was approved at the October 2007 Steering Committee meeting.

For more information about the Alliance for the Canadian Arthritis Program, visit www.arthritisalliance.ca.