

April 4, 2013
For Immediate Release

Arthritis Consumer Experts Issues Rural Arthritis Healthcare Challenge

(Victoria, B.C.) --- During the 21st Annual Rural and Remote Medicine Course, held in Victoria, B.C., Arthritis Consumer Experts declared a call to action for Canadian provincial and federal governments to address arthritis diagnosis, treatment and prevention in rural Canada.

Arthritis is not a well-understood group of diseases. Even among physicians, arthritis is the least likely to be suspected, especially when their patients are young.

“In rural Canadian communities, this fact is especially concerning. Rural Canada has the highest prevalence of arthritis. In Aboriginal people the prevalence is 1.3 - 1.6 times greater than for all of Canada,” stated Cheryl Koehn, president and founder of Arthritis Consumer Experts. She added, “Also, when First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people have arthritis, it’s more likely to be severe.”

Forty-six percent of Aboriginal Canadians dwell outside of urban centres. Compare that to the Canadian population overall - 81% live in urban areas - you can see that the healthcare of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit is the most likely to be adversely affected by rural healthcare challenges.

Experts claim telehealth is helping improve the delivery of healthcare for rural and remote regions. It is estimated that telehealth will lead to \$730 million in savings to the healthcare system, and save patients \$440 million each year.

Koehn also stated: “From our perspective, the critical issue for arthritis in rural healthcare is training. In rural and remote communities throughout Canada, there are few arthritis specialist (rheumatologists), so the people who live there rely on their family doctors. We are asking Canadian provincial and federal governments to adopt a model of care for arthritis that includes the training of rural frontline healthcare professionals to enable them to better detect, refer for diagnosis and treat arthritis.”

About Arthritis Consumer Experts

Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE) provides free education and information programs to people with arthritis and is committed to informing, educating and empowering people with arthritis to help them take control of their disease and improve their quality of life. ACE's JointHealth™ family of programs provides evidence-based information in reader-friendly language to people with arthritis, the public, governments and media.

Website: www.jointhehealth.org

- 30 -

For more information, or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Johanna Kendall
JointHealth™ Program and Social Media Director
kendall@jointhehealth.org
Arthritis Consumer Experts
www.jointhehealth.org
cel. 250-888-0212
tel. 604-974-1366