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For Immediate Release

## **Annual Report Card on Reimbursement Access to Arthritis Treatments in Canada Calls for Greater Government Focus to Improve Patient Outcomes**

Arthritis Consumer Experts Provides New Insights into  
Current Inflammatory Arthritis Treatment

**(Vancouver, B.C.)** --- Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE), one of Canada's leading arthritis patient education and advocacy organizations, reveals in its 2012 JointHealth™ **Report Card on Provincial Formulary Reimbursement Listings for Biologic Response Modifiers** the need for greater provincial government focus on improving the clinical treatment standards in reimbursement access to publicly-funded biologic response modifiers. Greater access to biologic treatments would reduce work disability and increased risk of mortality for the estimated 600,000 Canadians living with an inflammatory arthritis – such as rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis and psoriatic arthritis.

According to Cheryl Koehn, President, Arthritis Consumer Experts and a person living with rheumatoid arthritis: “At a time when provincial governments face the extreme challenges of managing health care spending, given the increasing demand from the aging population and the internal cost-drivers of the health care system, our elected officials have an opportunity to realize significant direct savings of valuable health care dollars and indirect cost savings to the economy.”

The 2011 report, “The Impact of Arthritis in Canada,” concludes that the early diagnosis and treatment of inflammatory arthritis with cost effective disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs), and for those who do not respond to traditional DMARDs, access to biologic therapies, would result in cumulative savings of almost \$39 billion to Canadian society over the next 30 years, which is a reduction of more than \$5 billion in direct costs and nearly \$34 billion in indirect costs.

“ACE’s JointHealth™ Report Card clearly demonstrates one of the paths to these savings exists in improving and equalizing provincial drug formulary reimbursement access to biologics across the country,” said Koehn.

Arthritis Consumer Expert's annual JointHealth™ Report Card is the country's only independent patient organization evaluation of public reimbursement access to arthritis medications. The 2011 Report Card raises basic questions on behalf of all Canadians struggling to live with inflammatory arthritis, "Why does reimbursement criteria for some biologics widely vary provincially making health care for people with inflammatory arthritis unequal and unfair? Why are biologics not listed in an equitable fashion as the science proves they should be?"

The release of the JointHealth™ Report Card follows the September 18, 2012 launch of the Arthritis Alliance of Canada's "Joint Action on Arthritis: A Framework to Improve Arthritis Prevention and Care in Canada," a plan that prioritizes areas of focus that will have the greatest impact on those living with arthritis.

The JointHealth™ Report Card strongly reinforces one of the three pillars of the "Framework's" approach to delivering better outcomes for those living with arthritis and reducing the burden of the disease on Canada's health care system and the economy: Improve access and delivery of care.

"Our community has spoken. Improving arthritis care is an urgent national priority. We call on every province to review our Report Card and work with us to ensure Canadians living with these severe forms of arthritis have the same treatment options and access to financial assistance compared to other citizens with cancer, diabetes and HIV," said Koehn.

**2012 JointHealth™ Report Card on Provincial Formulary Reimbursement Listings for Biologic Response Modifiers Highlights:**

No Canadian province provides reimbursement coverage for all biologic response modifiers approved by Health Canada. The table below provides current provincial rankings and their status change from the 2011 Report Card.

With more biologics becoming available for more arthritis types, this year's JointHealth™ Report Card has been expanded to include two new medications and three new indications. Previously, the Report Card provided information about coverage criteria for eight medications and 4 arthritis types. Now, it looks at ten medications for 7 different diseases. The new items are as follows: Rituximab (Rituxan) for vasculitis, in addition to rheumatoid arthritis; Belimumab (Benlysta) for systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE or lupus); and Denosumab (Prolia) for osteoporosis.

Provincial rankings also account for changes to the JointHealth™ Report Card. In some cases, movement has to do with provinces adding more medications to their reimbursement formularies. In other cases it has to do with the expanded number of medications ACE is now including on the JointHealth™ Report Card.

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