

**Share your plan for arthritis prevention, treatment, and care in British Columbia**

**Question 1**

The Arthritis Consumer Experts Arthritis Medications Report Card is designed to help Canadians evaluate where their province or territory ranks in terms of providing reimbursement for medications approved for inflammatory arthritis such as rheumatoid arthritis, axial spondyloarthritis, psoriatic arthritis and lupus. British Columbia is currently ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in Canada in providing reimbursement access to new biologic (originator and biosimilars) medications for people living with inflammatory arthritis.

**What will your government do to improve B.C.'s ranking and address the province's lagging equitable reimbursement access and patient/physician choice in treating inflammatory arthritis compared to the rest of Canada?**

**ANSWER:**

We need to see a massive expansion of healthcare coverage and services, as well as shorter wait times to see specialists. The BC Green Party has long been pushing for MSP coverage to be expanded significantly. This change will help to ensure that people with arthritis receive the treatment they need, when they need it, and that the costs of medication for arthritis are covered.

Indigenous Peoples in Canada have some of the highest rates of serious or life-threatening arthritis in the world and are at greater risk for becoming disabled by

**Question 2**

arthritis. Significant gaps in Indigenous arthritis care currently exist in B.C. Care models, such as having an Indigenous community-based patient care facilitator that address health care in a culturally relevant manner and the many barriers to care have been proven to resolve care gaps more effectively and optimize health outcomes of Indigenous Peoples with arthritis and comorbidities.<sup>1</sup>

**Will your government introduce culturally appropriate, patient-centered policies to help Indigenous Peoples navigate the healthcare system and receive coordinated care within their community to manage their arthritis?**

**ANSWER:**

The provincial government signed UNDRIP into law, but that has proven to be more of a performative gesture than tangible action toward reconciliation. If we, as a province, are truly committed to reconciliation then we have to ensure that Indigenous people receive care when they need it, to the extent that they need it, and that barriers preventing them from accessing the same level of care afforded others are removed.

The BC Green Party believes in evidence-based decision making, which means speaking to experts in order to determine how best to proceed. With regard to this issue, it means consulting Indigenous people and finding out why these gaps in care exist. As highlighted in the question, one way to reduce barriers would be to introduce culturally appropriate patient-centred policies, and I absolutely support taking that step toward addressing this issue.

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<sup>1</sup> Umaefulam et al. (2021). Arthritis liaison: a First Nations community-based patient care facilitator. *Health promotion and chronic disease prevention in Canada: research, policy and practice*. <https://doi.org/10.24095/hpcdp.41.6.04>

**Question 3**

The next B.C government must take steps to ensure the sustainability of prescription drug plans and the continued affordability of prescription medicines for B.C. patients. Over the first five years of the B.C. biosimilars initiative, the Province has saved \$732 million, thanks to people transitioning from originator biologics to their cost-effective biosimilars, which are highly similar versions of high-cost biologic drugs used to treat chronic diseases, such as inflammatory arthritis, diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease, multiple sclerosis, age-related macular degeneration, and certain cancers.

**Will your government commit to reinvesting biosimilars savings to increase accessibility to new medicines and expand coverage for existing medicines for people living with inflammatory arthritis?**

**ANSWER:**

**As mentioned previously, the BC Green Party supports expanding medical coverage in BC. The idea of reinvesting biosimilars savings to increase accessibility of other medicines for people living with arthritis makes sense and is an action I support.**

**Question 4**

Some individuals with severe osteoarthritis require joint replacement surgery to achieve better quality of life, less pain and more joint function. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the guideline for knee and hip replacement is to receive surgery within 26 weeks.<sup>2</sup> In B.C. in 2023, only 57% of knee replacement patients and 65% of hip replacement patients were treated within that guideline and below the Canadian average. This deeply impacts the lives of B.C. residents with osteoarthritis who require these surgeries.

**Will your government take steps to ensure timely, specialized care for B.C. residents struggling with osteoarthritis, including joint replacement surgery wait times that are within medically recommended guidelines?**

**ANSWER:**

**The fact that BC is not able to treat people within the medically recommended timeline highlights just how overburdened our healthcare system is. The BC Green Party has promised to take steps to address this by creating more medical facilities, and to invest in creating more opportunities for medical professionals to be trained and to work in this province.**

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<sup>2</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information. Wait times for priority procedures across Canada. <https://www.cihi.ca/en/wait-times-for-priority-procedures-in-canada-2024>

**Question 5**

The time to address models of care in arthritis is now after years of being at the back of the line of health care planning and delivery in B.C. There is a pressing need to explore, invest in, and innovate different care models that allow British Columbians to receive timely access to suitable care and support for managing their disease.

**What will your government do to provide high quality, accessible, evidence-based models of care, such as team-based care or expanded virtual care, for B.C. residents living with arthritis?**

**ANSWER:**

The BC Green Party has proposed the Dogwood model, which will see community clinics created around the province, to give everyone a chance to see a doctor in a timely manner. It is currently incredibly difficult to find a family physician, or to book an appointment with one if you are lucky enough to have one. Having access to medical professionals when you need them, how you need them, and where you need them is a major step in ensuring residents living with arthritis are well taken care of.