

Arthritis: The Most Common Disabling Condition of American Adults

Background:

- Arthritis affects about 46 million adults (1 in 5). (CDC, 2006)
- It is the largest cause of disability among adults (about 38% of adults with arthritis have disability because of it.). (CDC, 2006)
- The term “arthritis” applies to 100 rheumatic diseases. (CDC, 2006)
- Arthritis affects joints and connective tissues surrounding the joints. (CDC, 2006)
- Osteoarthritis is the most common form; it affects 21 million American adults. (CDC, 2006)
- Osteoarthritis is characterized by the degeneration of cartilage and bone. (CDC, 2006)
- Osteoarthritis usually affects larger joints like knees and hips, but can also occur in the hand. (CDC, 2006)
- Onset of osteoarthritis is usually after the age of forty. (CDC, 2006)
- The cause of osteoarthritis is unknown and there is no cure. Physical therapy, medications, and weight control relieve symptoms. (CDC, 2006)
- Gout affects 5.1 million adults. (CDC, 2006)
- Gout is caused by uric acid crystals in tissues and surrounding fluids. There is an overproduction or an undersecretion of uric acid in this form of arthritis. (CDC, 2006)
- Gout is treated with anti-inflammatory medication. (CDC, 2006)
- Rheumatoid Arthritis affects 2.1 million adults. (CDC, 2006)
- Rheumatoid Arthritis results in inflammation of joints and possibly internal organs. (CDC, 2006)
- Cartilage erosion and deformity of the joint often occur in Rheumatoid Arthritis. (CDC, 2006)
- Rheumatoid Arthritis is believed to be caused by an autoimmune response in which the immune system attacks joints and surrounding fluids. (CDC, 2006)
- Rheumatoid Arthritis can affect people of any age. (CDC, 2006)
- Rheumatoid Arthritis affects 7.9% of the population aged 18-44, 28.8% of the population aged 45-64, and 47.8% of the population aged 65 and older. (CDC, 2006)
- Rheumatoid Arthritis has no cure. It is often treated with medication, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and surgery. (CDC, 2006)
- Risk for arthritis increases with age. (CDC, 2006)
- Arthritis affects both genders. 60% of adults with arthritis are women, but gout occurs more frequently in men. (CDC, 2006)
- Rheumatoid Arthritis is believed to have a genetic factor in its development. (CDC, 2006)
- Obesity is a large risk factor for osteoarthritis, as is joint injury and repetitive motion of a particular joint. (CDC, 2006)

- Arthritis affects people of all ethnicities, but African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to have more disabling and painful conditions. (CDC, 2006)

Statement of the Problem:

- Because arthritis is the leading cause of disability among American adults, Healthy People 2010 has listed several objectives to address the issues that arthritis raises in the public health specialty. (Healthy People, 2006)
- Healthy People 2010 aims to “increase the mean number of days without severe pain among adults who have chronic joint symptoms” because pain is the largest factor in the functioning of adults with arthritis. Chronic pain results in the use of pain controlling medications, surgery, and alternative therapy. (Healthy People, 2006)
- Another goal of Healthy People is to “reduce the proportion of adults with chronic joint symptoms who experience a limitation in activity due to arthritis.” Adults with arthritis are generally less active than adults who do not have the disease, therefore increasing obesity, a large risk factor for osteoarthritis. (Healthy People, 2006)
- Independent functioning is important to the management of any chronic illness, therefore Healthy People desires to “reduce the proportion of all adults with chronic joint symptoms who have difficulty in performing two or more personal care activities.” (Healthy People, 2006)
- Many adults with arthritis experience feelings of depression and anxiety as a result of pain and disability, therefore Healthy People strives to “increase the proportion of adults aged eighteen years and older with arthritis who seek help in coping if they experience personal and emotional problems.” (Healthy People, 2006)
- Working-aged adults (18-64 years of age) have significantly lower employment rates. Healthy People aims to “increase the employment rate among adults with arthritis in the working-aged population.” (Healthy People, 2006)
- One treatment for arthritis is total knee replacement. Studies have shown that minorities have decreased access to the procedure. Healthy People is working to “eliminate racial disparities in the rate of total knee replacements.” (Healthy People, 2006)
- Even though arthritis is a common disease, many people do not seek treatment from a health care provider. Healthy People intends to “increase the proportion of adults who have seen a health care provider for their chronic joint symptoms.” (Healthy People, 2006)
- Part of effective arthritis therapy is self-education and self-management courses, but they are not readily available to the population. Healthy People demands the government to “increase the proportion of persons with arthritis who have had effective, evidence-based arthritis education as an integral part of the management of their condition.” (Healthy People, 2006)

Epidemiologic Picture of the Problem:

- About one in five American adults has some form of arthritis. (CDC, 2006)
- The risk of arthritis increases with age. (CDC, 2006)
- 27% of adults with arthritis have some form of physical limitation as of 1997. Healthy People aims to lower this figure to 21%. (Healthy People, 2006)
- As of 1997, two percent of adults with arthritis have “difficulty in performing two or more personal care activities.” Healthy People intends to lower this figure to 1.4%. (Healthy People, 2006)
- In 1997, only 64% of working-aged adults with arthritis had steady employment. Healthy People calls for an increase of this proportion to 78%. (Healthy People, 2006)
- According to the 1989 National Health Interview Survey, 16% of adults with arthritis were not receiving health care for their condition. (Healthy People, 2006)
- Racial minorities with arthritis have higher reports of disability and severe pain than their Caucasian counterparts. (CDC, 2006)
- Racial minorities with arthritis have lower access to total knee replacement surgery than their Caucasian counterparts. (Healthy People, 2006)
- Rheumatoid Arthritis often affects people with other autoimmune diseases, such as Systemic Lupus Erythematosus and Crohn’s Disease. (CDC, 2006)
- Although arthritis typically affects adults, there are an estimated 300,000 children living with arthritis. 50,000 of these children have Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. (Arthritis Foundation, 2006)

Solutions to the Problem:

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases
(www.niams.nih.gov)

The NIAMS is a governmental organization devoted to research, training, and information relating to diseases of the skin, bones, muscles, and joints. NIAMS has a particular focus of decreasing the number of racial minorities that are affected by these diseases. NIAMS has a particular focus on osteoarthritis because it is the most common form of adult arthritis in the United States. This agency researches the development and progression of osteoarthritis in high-risk groups. It provides workshops for health professionals and osteoarthritis patients about all aspects of the disease. There is also research under way to determine how a normally functioning joint’s cells work in order to develop new strategies for the treatment and prevention of osteoarthritis. Currently, osteoarthritis therapy consists of treating the symptoms, but NIAMS sponsors research to find disease modifying therapies to treat the illness itself. There is also research to find potential bodily events leading to the development of osteoarthritis to increase early detection and improve treatment. NIAMS also has a commitment to target prevention in high-risk groups. There is also a focus to research the racial disparity among total knee replacement recipients.

The Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov/arthritis)

The main goal of the CDC's arthritis initiative is to improve arthritis patients' quality of life. Their plan is based on the publication, *National Arthritis Action Plan: A Public Health Strategy*, which was written by the CDC, the Arthritis Foundation, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and 90 other related organizations. The focus of this plan is effective pain management and reduction of disability among arthritis patients. The CDC researches arthritis related trends and the impact arthritis has on patients' daily lives. There is also research under way to analyze how arthritis affects the United States as a nation. The CDC also raises awareness for the necessity of adequate exercise in arthritis treatment. This organization also helps individual states design programs to support arthritis patients, particularly in the areas of intervention and the establishment of partnerships. The CDC urges patients and medical professionals to seek early diagnosis and effective self-education to properly manage the disease.

The Arthritis Foundation (www.arthritis.org)

The Arthritis Foundation is the only organization that deals with all forms of arthritis and arthritis-related diseases. This organization has a multi-faceted approach to dealing with all aspects of the disease. The Arthritis Foundation not only has self-education programs, but also informational media such as brochures and videotapes. It sponsors both support and study groups, as well as forums to discuss arthritis-related issues in the community. The Arthritis Foundation publishes its own magazine, *Arthritis Today*. This organization provides exercise classes to patients with arthritis, and education courses and resources for health professionals who work with people who have arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation acts as a government advocacy group to protect the rights of all who have arthritis and provides funding for scientific research. Also, the foundation has a question and answer service by phone and by email. The Arthritis Foundation also includes sub-organizations, such as the American Juvenile Arthritis Organization and the Arthritis and Rheumatism International. All who work for the Arthritis Foundation are volunteers.

Internet Resources:

MedicinePlus Interactive Tutorials

(<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/arthritis/htm/index.htm>)

The National Library of Medicine and the National Institute of Health sponsor interactive tutorials on various diseases. This tutorial, which pertains to arthritis, includes all aspects of the disease, such as symptoms and treatments. The tutorial also has pictures to illustrate, and there are even questions to answer at the end of each section to confirm comprehension. The text is read out loud so that a person who may have difficulty reading the print has equal access to the material. This tutorial is useful for providing a brief overview of arthritis, but should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice.

The American College of Rheumatology (www.rheumatology.org)

The American College of Rheumatology is an organization of medical professionals who are devoted to the treatment of arthritis. Their main goal is to provide better treatment for arthritis. The American College of Rheumatology sponsors an annual conference, The Annual Scientific Meeting, which is attended by international arthritis specialists. The organization also sponsors several other smaller conferences at other points during the year. They publish a scientific journal called *Arthritis and Rheumatism*. A goal that the American College of Rheumatology has is to increase federal funding for arthritis research, as well as to improve public policy that affects arthritis patients. There is also an organization that is for other specialists, such as physical and occupational therapists and mental health specialists.

The American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (www.aarda.org)

The American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association is an organization devoted to general awareness of autoimmune disease, a category into which rheumatoid arthritis and many diseases that cause rheumatoid arthritis fit. This association's goal is to conduct research, to achieve funding, to raise awareness about early diagnosis, and to find possible preventions and cures for autoimmune disease. The American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association sponsors medical conferences for both professionals and patients. It also raises awareness about misdiagnosis and unnecessary death resulting from misdiagnosis. The research this organization supports is directed towards autoimmunity itself, not towards specific conditions. There is also a telephone line which callers can receive referrals, information, and support. A newsletter is also published called *InFocus*.

Bibliography:

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National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases,
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The Arthritis Foundation, <http://www.arthritis.org>.

The American College of Rheumatology, <http://www.rheumatology.org>.

The American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association, <http://www.aarda.org>.

(Class Handout)

All About Arthritis

- One in five American adults have some form of arthritis (CDC)
- The most common forms of arthritis are osteoarthritis, gout, and rheumatoid arthritis (CDC)
- Osteoarthritis involves the erosion of cartilage (CDC)
- Gout is the buildup of uric acid in a joint (CDC)
- Rheumatoid Arthritis is caused by an autoimmune response (CDC)
- Arthritis is the largest cause of disability among American adults (CDC)
- Other autoimmune diseases can cause Rheumatoid Arthritis (CDC)
- There is no cure for arthritis, but it can be managed by medications, surgery, physical therapy, and other methods (CDC)

However, while a lot of adults get arthritis, there are 300,000 children currently living with arthritis in the United States. (Arthritis Foundation)

50,000 of these children have Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. (Arthritis Foundation)

Including me...and now I tell my story and show you what a joint that is affected by Rheumatoid Arthritis looks like.

Back to Betty C. Jung's Web site	http://www.bettyjung.net/
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