



## New survey reveals inflammatory arthritis affects quality of life

*Half of respondents say they are unable to work full-time and nearly 75% say inflammatory arthritis affects daily activities*

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**Montreal, QC (October 12, 2011)** – A new survey of 3,000 Canadians living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), psoriatic arthritis (PsA), and ankylosing spondylitis (AS) reveals that Canadians feel that their inflammatory arthritis interferes with their overall happiness, and prevents them from enjoying many of their favourite activities.

The survey was conducted by Abbott to reveal the extent to which inflammatory arthritis affects the daily lives of people who live with these diseases. Arthritis and other rheumatic conditions currently affect nearly 4.5 million Canadians, with arthritis being among the top three most common chronic diseases in Canada.\*

The economic burden of arthritis in Canada is estimated at \$4.4 billion annually\*\*. Among the survey respondents, 34% said that they have been living with their chronic illness for 20 or more years. Respondents indicated that their illness has affected their productivity level at work and home, with 48% stating that it prevents them from working full-time hours.

Donald Karp, who was diagnosed in his twenties with AS, understands what it means to lose the ability to live a normal life: “You never know when your mobility will be affected. At 23 years old I was diagnosed and eventually had to quit my job at an oil and gas company due to the pain. I thought that my life was changed forever. But since I started treatment a few years ago, I feel that I have been given my life back – I am living pain free and I’m working full-time again. But even more amazingly, I’ve been able to get back into snowboarding, which I love, and I’m even able to compete nationally. That’s a huge change from not being able to stand up if I sneezed, because of the pain in my back.

“I would encourage anyone living with inflammatory arthritis to not just accept living with pain but to work with their doctor to get a proper diagnosis and to find a treatment that works for them. In my case, diagnosis took a few years and then a few years more to find the treatment that worked for me. So don’t give up,” adds Karp.

The study revealed some interesting facts about living with inflammatory arthritis:

- 73% said their chronic illness affected their day to day activities at home or at work
- 42% of participants thought their chronic illness interfered with their hobbies or recreational activities

- 67% of participants said they haven't been able to enjoy all the activities they used to do prior to the occurrence of their symptoms
- Women had a more negative outlook on their overall health than men with 42% of women stating they thought they were in good health compared to 44% of men
- 48% said their chronic illness prevents them from working full-time hours

“When most people think of arthritis, it is osteoarthritis that comes to mind. It is critically important to shed light on inflammatory arthritis and the dramatic effect it has on people’s lives,” says Dr. Carter Thorne, rheumatologist in Newmarket. “Inflammatory arthritis can strike at any age – most people don’t realize that even children as young as 18 months can be hit with arthritis. People with these conditions often wait a significant period of time before they are diagnosed, and many come to just accept that pain and restricted activity are a part of their lives. But with the advances we have made in treatment in the past decade, that doesn’t need to be the case. We now have the ability to help people with inflammatory arthritis get back to living life and being productive.”

“Patients often don’t know where to turn for information about living with inflammatory arthritis,” says Kathy Drouin, a registered nurse at the Ottawa Hospital Arthritis Centre. “These are illnesses that don’t just affect your joints; they affect your whole life. This disease affects your happiness and your relationships with friends and family. To cope with such an illness, I recommend that patients talk with their healthcare providers and visit support websites such as [myhealthmyfuture.ca](http://myhealthmyfuture.ca), which was designed specifically for people living with inflammatory disease. It provides unbiased information, resources and support for patients as well as for their family and friends. Many people are afraid of what their life is going to be like now that they have been diagnosed with inflammatory arthritis. Hearing from someone like Donald who has been through a similar journey and is so optimistic can really help.”

#### **About the survey**

From May 27 to June 30, 2011, an online survey was conducted among Canadian adults living with rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis who are Angus Reid Forum panel members and ICOM. The margin of error on the full base — which measures sampling variability — is +/- 2.62%. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

#### **About Abbott**

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*\*[Life with Arthritis in Canada](#) - A personal and public health challenge by Public Health Agency of Canada release in 2010.*

*\*\*The Burden of Arthritis in Canada  
[http://www.uhn.ca/donate/aarc/site/aa\\_diseases/aa\\_facts.asp](http://www.uhn.ca/donate/aarc/site/aa_diseases/aa_facts.asp)*

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