THE IMPACT OF ARTHRITIS ON SOUTH AUSTRALIA 2015
Arthritis is one of the most common, costly and disabling chronic conditions in South Australia. One in four South Australians has arthritis and people of all ages are affected including children and young adults.

The impact of arthritis on individuals, society and the health system is profound.

On a national level, arthritis costs the health and welfare systems more than $5.6 billion annually. 1 Arthritis is also a leading cause of disability and early retirement and is an extremely painful condition that affects 1 in 1,000 children. Individuals with arthritis often live with chronic pain, stiffness and limited mobility. Many struggle to manage their daily chores or to stay in their jobs because of the condition, leading to financial hardship and social isolation.

Yet we know that much can be done to reduce the impact and severity of arthritis.

Arthritis SA has been supporting people with arthritis in South Australia for 40 years. Our mission is “To be recognised as the leading provider in SA that empowers people with arthritis and related conditions to achieve the best quality of life through advocacy, education, self-management and the support of research.”

We help people with arthritis by providing information resources, telephone and peer support, self-management education and exercise classes. We also work with health professionals, the community and other stakeholders to raise awareness of the burden of arthritis and how it can be alleviated.

The future holds many challenges as an ageing and increasingly obese population will see the number of people with arthritis double by 2050. Unless we take steps now to reduce the impact of arthritis, the associated costs could overwhelm the health system.

Education and awareness raising, strategies to support early diagnosis and better treatment, and research to find a cure for arthritis are critical parts of the solution.

Arthritis SA will continue to support and advocate on behalf of all people with arthritis and to work with government, health professionals and other stakeholders to alleviate the burden of this debilitating condition. In particular, support for research and improving the lives of children with arthritis are key priority areas.

We ask the government to recognise the value of our work and commit to working with us to provide a better quality of life for the one in four people in our state who have arthritis.

Colette Smith
President
Arthritis SA

THE IMPACT TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE

Arthritis is the most common chronic disease in South Australia, affecting more than 270,000 people.2

Arthritis costs the South Australian health system about $200 million a year in joint replacements alone and this cost is increasing by $8 million a year3

Arthritis is a major cause of disability and pain

Arthritis reduces productivity, with enormous economic consequences. Nationally, early retirement due to arthritis costs $9.4 billion in lost GDP alone4

Emotionally and socially, the hidden costs of arthritis are immeasurable

By 2050, the number of cases of arthritis in Australia is projected to double to 7 million.5

MUCH CAN BE DONE TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF ARTHRITIS

HEALTH SERVICES

• Increase awareness of arthritis through consumer information and education campaigns.

Last year, Arthritis SA doubled the number of contacts with people with arthritis delivering education, support and self-management programs.

• Expand information and education programs for health care professionals to improve effective management of people with arthritis.

• Implement strategies to support early diagnosis and treatment of arthritis, essential to reducing disability and ultimately the financial impact on people and the health system. South Australians currently experience long waiting times to see a rheumatologist for specialist care. With only one paediatric rheumatologist in the state, children need to wait an average of five months for an appointment.

• Increase funding for research to find a cure and better treatments for arthritis. Arthritis SA has committed well over one million dollars to research both at state and national levels, but overall funding for arthritis research is low relative to the burden of the condition.

ARTHRITIS SA IS THERE TO HELP SOUTH AUSTRALIANS WITH ARTHRITIS

Arthritis SA is a non-government, not-for-profit charity and raises funds to support people with arthritis through the provision of:

• Advocacy strategies and stakeholder engagement activities

• Phone support from 10am to 3pm business days

• Printed literature and fact sheets on all areas of arthritis and management

• An educational website www.arthritis.sa.org.au

• Community talks and talks to health professionals

• Take Action on Pain Program, offered through pharmacies, for sufferers

• Exercise and Tai Chi classes specifically designed for people with arthritis

• Arthritis SA support groups

• Information and support for children and families dealing with juvenile arthritis

• Support for research to improve treatments and find a cure for arthritis both locally and nationally

• Take Charge of Life programs providing participants with key strategies and information to better manage their arthritis.

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND SEE:

• A reduction in the prevalence and severity of arthritis in SA

• A reduction in pain and disability for people with arthritis

• An improvement in workforce retention and productivity as a result of more effective management of people with arthritis

• A slowing in the demand for joint replacement surgery

Sources:
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013 Australian Health Survey 2011-12 Final Results. Data relate to South Australia
3. Arthritis SA 2013. Arthritis Cost of Disease