

The Arthritis Society supports families with programs, resources

TORONTO, Sept. 26, 2013 /CNW/ - Arthritis is often thought of as a disease associated with aging, however, a report released today by The Arthritis Society estimates that as many as 24,000 Canadian children aged 18 and under live with a form of arthritis, or more than 3 out of every 1,000 kids.

"When you consider the lifelong effects of arthritis, this number is troubling," says Janet Yale, president and CEO of The Arthritis Society. "We need improved testing and treatment protocols, increased investment in research, and impactful programs and services that will ease the burden of arthritis for children in Canada."

The updated figures, drawn from a report developed by the Arthritis Community Research & Evaluation Unit (ACREU), were estimated drawing on analyses of data from Canadian Community Health Surveys (CCHS) from 2007 to 2010, and were reviewed under the guidance of leading paediatric rheumatologists.

"We applaud The Arthritis Society's leadership in calling for this update," says Dr. Elizabeth Badley, director of the Arthritis Community Research and Evaluation Unit who led the analysis. "Having a clear consensus on the size of the problem is an important step to being able to address it, and should help bring the Canadian arthritis community together in common cause to support these children and their families."

The Arthritis Society offers a number of programs aimed at addressing childhood arthritis:

- A backpack program for children aged 10 and under diagnosed with arthritis. The backpack is specially chosen to ease joint strain, and it contains arthritis-friendly resources designed to help children and their families, including a plush bear with a removable warming and cooling pack.
- A national childhood arthritis advisory council, formed earlier this year to help inform The Society's program and resource development for children living with arthritis.
- A special donations program to fund research and programs targeted specifically towards addressing the challenges of childhood arthritis.
- Summer camps for children living with arthritis in British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Quebec, and family days in some cities in Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario.
- A [conference for families in Atlantic Canada](#), being held next month in Halifax
- A pilot interactive chronic pain management workshop in Ontario for children aged 4-12, offering proven strategies for effective self-management translated into an age-appropriate approach.

In addition, The Arthritis Society recently awarded a research grant to Simon Eng, a PhD student at the Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), to develop a classification system using data collected from children living with arthritis to help understand the biology underlying the disease.

Dr. Rae Yeung, Eng's PhD supervisor at SickKids and the University of Toronto, explains: "This project will allow us to develop specific treatments targeted to individuals with as few side effects as possible, providing a way to greatly increase the standard of care and quality of life for everyone living with arthritis, including children."

Children and teenagers can be affected by a variety of forms of arthritis, any of which can have potentially devastating effects on developing bodies. The most frequently diagnosed form is juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), but lupus, psoriatic arthritis, vasculitis and other forms are also found. Osteoarthritis, which is the most common form of arthritis found in adults, is rare in children and teens.

24,000 Canadian Children Live with Arthritis

Written by Australian Business

To learn more about arthritis in children, or to help support research and programs targeted to childhood arthritis, visit <http://www.arthritis.ca/Childhood> .

ABOUT THE ARTHRITIS SOCIETY

The Arthritis Society has been setting lives in motion for over 65 years. Dedicated to a vision of living well while creating a future without arthritis, The Society is Canada's principal health charity providing education, programs and support to the over 4.6 million Canadians living with arthritis. Since its founding in 1948, The Society has been the largest non-government funder of arthritis research in Canada , investing more than \$185 million in projects that have led to breakthroughs in the diagnosis, treatment and care of people with arthritis. For more information and to make a donation, visit www.arthritis.ca .

SOURCE Arthritis Society