



## RA: Join the Fight Initiative Backgrounder

[www.RAJointheFight.com](http://www.RAJointheFight.com)

### **RA: Join the Fight**

**RA: Join the Fight** aims to be a global source of information to help educate people living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and those who support them.

**RA: Join the Fight** is a collaborative global effort. The initiative partnered with experts in the field – patients, physicians, nurses and researchers – to ensure the educational resources are useful and compelling for patients, those who care for them, and the general public.

More than 40 advocacy organizations from around the world have endorsed **RA: Join the Fight**.

Visit [www.RAJointheFight.com](http://www.RAJointheFight.com) to learn more.

### **Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)**

Rheumatoid arthritis, or RA, is a chronic autoimmune disease in which the body mistakenly attacks healthy joints, causing pain, swelling, stiffness and over time, loss of function in the joints, as well as overall fatigue and weakness.<sup>1,2,3</sup> RA may also cause premature mortality, disability and compromised quality of life.<sup>4</sup>

The onset of RA usually occurs in people between the ages of 25 and 55 years old, though it can occur at virtually any age.<sup>1,2</sup> Typically, RA affects women more than men, with three times as many women suffering from the disease.<sup>2,5</sup> It is estimated that RA affects between 0.5 and 1.0 percent of the adult population worldwide.<sup>6</sup>

Many people living with RA have difficulty performing common everyday tasks, like opening a jar or turning a doorknob.<sup>3</sup> If not managed properly, over time, advanced RA can even result in permanent joint destruction.<sup>2,3</sup>

This is why early diagnosis is important — so patients can collaborate with their doctor to develop a plan to manage their disease.

\*Prevalence rates are based on those reported in several European and North American populations. Lower rates have been reported in Africa and Southeast Asia, including China and Japan, and higher rates in certain Native American Indian tribes.

### **Global RA Patient Survey**

The foundation of the initiative is an anonymous global RA patient survey, which evaluated results from 10,171 adults with RA and was conducted in 42 countries by Harris Interactive on behalf of **RA: Join the Fight**.

Participating countries include:

- Algeria
- Argentina
- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Bosnia
- Brazil
- Canada
- China
- Colombia
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- France
- Germany
- Hong Kong
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Macedonia
- Mexico
- Morocco
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Russia
- Saudi Arabia
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Korea
- Spain
- Sweden
- Taiwan
- Tunisia
- UAE
- UK
- United States
- Venezuela

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### Survey highlights include:

- The majority of patients (74 percent) say they know a great deal or a moderate amount about RA, but nearly half (46 percent) do not recognize that joint damage caused by RA is irreversible
- While more than four in five patients (82 percent) recognize that RA is a severe, progressive and destructive disease, only 56 percent have a disease management plan in place
- Although about nine in 10 patients (91 percent) said that they have a good understanding of why it is important to manage their RA, as many as two in three (66 percent) mistakenly agree that a lack of pain means their RA is under control
- Compared to those who do not have a disease management plan, patients who have a disease management plan with their healthcare provider are nearly twice as likely to feel hopeful (39 percent vs. 23 percent) and confident (31 percent vs. 16 percent) when asked how they felt about living with their RA over the past week
- Nearly three in four patients (72 percent) recognize that joint damage may still be progressing even if pain is under control, but 38 percent of patients mistakenly agree that the progression of RA cannot be changed regardless of how and when it is managed
- On average, patients experience symptoms of RA for nearly two years before being diagnosed with RA by a healthcare provider
- More than half of patients (57 percent) say that their RA has negatively affected their ability to perform physical activities of everyday life
- About two in five RA patients (41 percent) say that their job/career or ability to work was negatively impacted by their RA -- and one in three of these patients say they have had to take days off (33 percent) or stop working altogether for a period of time (32 percent)

### **Call-to-Action and Looking Ahead**

At the heart of this initiative is a pledge. **RA: Join the Fight** is encouraging people with RA from all corners of the world to pledge to start the conversation, share their personal goals with their doctor and work together to develop a plan to manage their disease.

Patients can go to [www.RAJointheFight.com](http://www.RAJointheFight.com) to take the pledge – and check back to find more information and tips on how to start the conversation with their doctor.

**RA: Join the Fight** plans to be a long-term initiative, continuing to develop programs and provide resources for patients and those who support them.

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**Initiative Stewardship**

More information on members of the **RA: Join the Fight** global advisory committee – experts including RA patients, physicians, nurses and researchers – is below.



**Josef Smolen, M.D.**

Chairman, Department of Rheumatology, Internal Medicine III, Medical University of Vienna, Austria



**Roger Levy, M.D., PhD**

Adjunct Professor of Rheumatology, The State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



**Peter Nash, MBBS, FRACP**

Associate Professor, Department of Medicine, The University of Queensland, Australia



**Karel Pavelka, M.D., PhD**

Director, Institute of Rheumatology and Clinic of Rheumatology, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic



**Manuel Robles-San Román, M.D.**

Head of the Rheumatology Department, Internal Medicine Division, Centro Médico ISSEMyM, Metepec, State of Mexico



**Maarten de Wit**

Psoriatic arthritis patient for over 30 years, participates in many scientific initiatives to improve clinical outcomes in rheumatology research



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**Claire Kinneavy**

Community volunteer, master trainer in chronic disease self-management, previous director, Arthritis Ireland



**Konstancja Sacharczuk**

Member of 3majmy sie razem, a Polish association that focuses on pediatric rheumatoid diseases



**Stephen Bevan**

Founding President, Fit for Work Europe Coalition, The Work Foundation, Lancaster University, UK

**Souzi Makri**

Chair of the Agora board, an umbrella group comprising organizations of patients with rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases in Southern Europe



**David Magnusson**

Vice Chairman, Swedish Rheumatism Association



**Janice Mooney**

Senior Lecturer, University of East Anglia, Norwich

**Inok Lee, RN, PhD**

Lecturer, Department of Nursing, Korea National Open University and President and Research Director of Korean Rheumatism Friendship Association



**Dawn Richards, PhD**

Vice President, Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance

References:

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