2017-Q2 Accomplishments

Advocacy & Access
The Arthritis Foundation amplifies the voices of people with arthritis so they are heard and listened to at the federal and state levels.

As health care repeal and replace debates were underway, we were there at every step – in contact with patients, having dialogue with policymakers, keeping our constituents informed and offering guidance and resources.

- We urged senators and representatives to consider several recommendations in further debates.

- We held a webinar with the American College of Rheumatology to address “What Health Care Reform Means to You.”

- We took a stand on the administration’s fiscal year 2018 budget, asserting that deep spending cuts in health care would negatively affect the growing number of Americans with arthritis.

We joined other organizations in signing official letters requesting actions that aid people with chronic conditions like arthritis.

- We endorsed federal legislation that will limit the use of step therapy. The Arthritis Foundation successfully influenced step therapy bills in four states this year and now we’re pushing for the Restoring the Patient’s Voice Act of 2017 at the federal level.

- We expressed concerns about possible changes to Medicaid and to the Medicare Part B program that could harm the most vulnerable Americans and jeopardize their access to care.

- We weighed in on the patient engagement process proposed by the Institute for Clinical and Economic Review (ICER). We believe patients must be at the center of clinical drug reviews and part of every conversation that occurs.

- We appealed to Appropriations Committee leaders for more investment in important wellness initiatives, like growing the Arthritis Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and expanding research at the National Institutes of Health.

We grew our advocacy army to more than 150,000 Arthritis Foundation Advocates who are fighting on the front lines to break down barriers to care.
Together, we were actively involved in more than 160 policies in 39 states.

We achieved more than a dozen legislative victories that support patient access to care. See our Advocacy Report Card for all the details on the first half of 2017.

We increased awareness of arthritis through our #FightFor50 campaign during Arthritis Awareness Month in May.

- 600 personal stories were posted online, garnering 2.6 million impressions.

Help & Support
Everyone’s experience with arthritis and other rheumatic conditions is unique. A big part of the Arthritis Foundation’s mission is to provide the information and resources people need to manage their pain and overcome the obstacles they encounter.

- Our wide variety of online tools gives users many options to choose from, based on their personalized needs – whether it’s finding local arthritis resources, getting insurance assistance, learning ways to reduce pain or another form of support.

- Reaching 4 million readers per issue, Arthritis Today magazine is filled with useful information to help make living with arthritis easier, from lifestyle tips and ideas on diet and exercise to medical research updates and inspiring stories about those who’ve faced the challenges firsthand.

- By midway through the year, we had connected with 3,376 health care providers nationwide, achieving our 2017 goal. We work with providers and patients to improve understandings about the unique challenges arthritis brings and to make them aware of our life-changing tools.

We established more support groups nationwide to reduce feelings of isolation, which about half of people with arthritis say they experience.

- Arthritis Support Networks (ASN), formerly Arthritis Introspective, held GX10, their 10th annual national gathering, in Kansas, June 9-11. Clark Middleton, actor and keynote speaker, spoke about the challenges and adjustments he had to make after being diagnosed with arthritis at age 4.

- By midyear, 45 ASN groups had formed in communities nationwide.

We brought patients to the table to help improve the resources and programs we offer.

- In Q2, we began examining results from surveys that went out to more than 50,000 constituents about the impact of 19 Arthritis Foundation mission assets – like our Better Living Toolkit, JA Conference and other
resources. We also held focus group discussions. These insights will help us fine-tune our strategy and support plans.

- We kicked off our new Patient Leadership Council, comprised of 12 arthritis patients who will make sure the patient voice is infused in everything we do.

Scientific Discovery

Every day, the Arthritis Foundation is pursuing innovative discoveries to advance treatments for more than 100 types of arthritis and ultimately find a cure.

To make the biggest impact possible, we’re focusing on four scientific initiatives for which we’re seeking substantial funding through our “Be the One” capital campaign.

Those initiatives are:
- Conquering Childhood Arthritis
- Advancing Osteoarthritis Treatment
- Cultivating a New Generation of Rheumatologists
- Collaborating With Patients for Better Health

Meanwhile, we’re moving the needle in our investment of $500 million in arthritis research over the past seven decades. Our most recent funding awards went to six scientists whose proposals were considered with input from patients.

Highlights from other active projects:
- A team headed by Dr. Farshid Guilak is reprogramming stem cells into “smart” cells that automatically administer an arthritis vaccine to stop inflammation and repair damaged cartilage.

After injecting adenosine, a sugar-based molecule, into the joints of research mice with knee OA, Dr. Bruce Cronstein and his team observed improvements in joint damage.

- Foundation-funded investigator Dr. James Martin has filed a patent for a pharmaceutical that claims to enhance cartilage repair in mammals and could lead to OA treatment advancements in humans.

We teamed up with other organizations to bolster our progress in conquering arthritis.
- We helped plan, coordinate and co-hosted the 2017 Childhood Arthritis and Rheumatology Research Alliance (CARRA) annual meeting, where we spoke to the 400 attendees about the importance of young patients and their families being heard by JA researchers.
• We held an interactive Facebook Live and Twitter Periscope event, in partnership with the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), about engaging patients in arthritis research.

• Our groundbreaking Osteoarthritis Patient-Focused Drug Development meeting gave patients the opportunity to share their experiences and concerns, which will help inform the benefit/risk framework of the Food and Drug Administration.

Juvenile Arthritis
About 70 percent of parents feel that nobody understands how arthritis affects their children. In fact, many kids with juvenile arthritis feel isolated, have to miss a lot of school and often must be hospitalized. We’re working to change all of that by bringing JA families together, educating them on a variety of topics and pursuing treatments and cures for the many forms of childhood rheumatic diseases.

We hosted our 33rd annual National Juvenile Arthritis Conference. Read about what JA Warriors in Houston and Indianapolis experienced.
- Since 1984, our JA Conference has touched the lives of more than 25,000 participants.
- This year, we hosted a total of 450 families and 100 young adults in both locations, helping them cope with the challenges of JA by connecting, learning and growing.
- We awarded close to $400,000 in scholarships to offset travel expenses, making it possible for many families to join us.

Another way we help is by supporting young people in transition from childhood to adulthood. This year:
• Eight college students were awarded the Winterhoff Arthritis Scholarship to subsidize educational costs for students with rheumatic diseases, selected from more than 300 applications.
• In partnership with The Hospital for Sick Children, we launched the iPeer2Peer mentorship pilot program to support teens with JA and other rheumatic diseases. We trained 13 young adults with JA to help their peers navigate common challenges.

Across the country, we held 36 summer camps and teen retreats for hundreds of kids, giving them the chance to be among their own so they could bond, learn and have fun. Many camp staff and volunteers are former campers themselves who want to help others with JA conquer their struggles and know they’re not alone.