

**Arthritis Foundation: Public Comment**  
**April 12, 2011**  
**Meeting of the Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative  
and Public Health (Advisory Group)**

Good Afternoon: my name is Kimberly Beer and I am the Associate Director of Advocacy for the Arthritis Foundation.

The Arthritis Foundation is the patient voice for the 50 million Americans, including 300,000 children with arthritis. 21 million Americans, with arthritis, have some type of disability associated with their arthritis. In fact, arthritis is the most common cause of disability in this nation.

The Arthritis Foundation aims to reduce by 20% the number of people who are physically limited by arthritis. We applaud President Obama, the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion and Integrative and Public Health for making prevention and wellness a major policy focus for the nation. We applaud these efforts to invest in public health programs that manage and prevent chronic disease. However, often, efforts focus only on heart disease, diabetes or cancer prevention and fail to include the critical role arthritis plays as a co-morbidity. **This is unacceptable.**

One can not address chronic disease prevention without first addressing arthritis—a disease that affects over 50 percent of those with diabetes and heart disease (compared to 20% of the general population). Arthritis is one of the main painful reasons why people with diabetes and heart disease do not engage in physical activity. Without appropriate evidence-based interventions, the number of Americans with arthritis is expected to increase to 67 million Americans (25% of the population) within the next 20 years. The burden of arthritis costs the U.S. economy a staggering \$128 billion each year. Arthritis is the leading diagnosis for joint replacement, and one of the fastest growing expenditures in the Medicare program. More must be done to limit the impact of arthritis.

This personal and public cost will only increase as the number of individuals with arthritis continues to rise. In order to mitigate this, the nation must confront this growing burden and more widely implement evidence-based strategies to fight arthritis.

The Arthritis Foundation respectfully requests that arthritis be included in your initiatives moving forward that focus on chronic disease management and prevention. The National Public Health Agenda, initiated by the Arthritis Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control, and involving over 35 other public health, aging and provider organizations calls for wider dissemination of 4 evidence-based strategies for the prevention of osteoarthritis.

Physical Activity, Self Management, Injury Prevention and Weight Management are four proven evidence-based interventions that we know can curtail the osteoarthritis trajectory that is disabling more and more Americans each year.

In closing, the Arthritis Foundation strongly believes the nation can not address other chronic diseases without first addressing arthritis.

I hope you will consider our comments regarding arthritis while developing policies addressing chronic disease management and prevention. The Arthritis Foundation ([www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)) is working in communities all over the country to prevent and control arthritis and can be a valuable partner in your efforts. Thank you for your kind consideration.