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NEW STUDY UNCOVERS PREVALENCE, BURDEN OF PEDIATRIC ARTHRITIS IN U.S.

For the first time, data provide a solid benchmark from which to measure changes in prevalence rates

Atlanta, December 5, 2007 – A study published in the December issue of *Arthritis Care & Research* estimates that 294,000 U.S. children and teenagers under age 18 (or one in 250 children) have been diagnosed with arthritis or another rheumatologic condition. The study, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), provides for the first time a more accurate estimate of the number of children diagnosed with arthritis and related conditions across the U.S. and within each state, creating a benchmark against which to measure future shifts in occurrence.

A provision of the proposed Arthritis Prevention, Control and Cure Act introduced in 2004 called for a better determination of the size of the childhood arthritis problem. As a result, the CDC, in collaboration with several other organizations, began an intensive review of options on how to estimate the number of children with arthritis and related conditions, as well as what conditions should be included in such a count. In addition to providing these improved national estimates, the study also provides estimates for each state. “The CDC's first-ever estimates of childhood arthritis-related diagnoses show a state-by-state range from a low of 500 children in Wyoming to a high of 38,000 children in California,” said Jeffrey Sacks, M.D., M.P.H., Captain in the U.S. Public Health Service at the CDC. Study data also show that children diagnosed with arthritis and other rheumatologic conditions account for approximately 827,000 doctor visits each year, including an average of 83,000 emergency department visits.

“This study finds that one in 250 children have been diagnosed with arthritis or related conditions. Due to the lack of availability of pediatric rheumatologists trained in the diagnosis and care of children with arthritis, we know that many children with inflammatory forms of arthritis are not diagnosed early enough to prevent disability,” says Patience White, M.D., Arthritis Foundation chief public health officer and a pediatric rheumatologist. “New treatments are now available for children with

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inflammatory arthritis that decrease disability thus making early diagnosis essential. We know that 11 states do not have a practicing pediatric rheumatologist. The need for more pediatric rheumatologists is critical for families and children with arthritis. Passage of the Arthritis Prevention, Control and Cure Act is necessary as it would encourage more physicians to enter the field and also would highlight the research needs for children with arthritis.”

For children and their families living with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (JRA), or other pediatric rheumatologic conditions, the Arthritis Foundation offers resources for managing the disease, including:

- Information detailing the different types of pediatric arthritis
- Warning signs that may help to diagnose arthritis in your child
- Treatment options and supplemental resources, such as how to manage your child’s arthritis in the classroom

For more information about juvenile arthritis conditions, including a complimentary copy of the Arthritis Foundation’s “Arthritis in Children” brochure which includes the latest information on treatments and self-management techniques, contact the Arthritis Foundation at 1-800-283-7800 or visit www.arthritis.org.

About the Arthritis Foundation

The Arthritis Foundation is the leading health organization addressing the needs of some 46 million Americans living with arthritis, the nation’s most common cause of disability. Founded in 1948, with headquarters in Atlanta, the Arthritis Foundation has multiple service points located throughout the country.

The Arthritis Foundation is the largest private, not-for-profit contributor to arthritis research in the world, funding more than \$380 million in research grants since 1948. The foundation helps individuals take control of arthritis by providing public health education; pursuing public policy and legislation; and conducting evidence-based programs to improve the quality of life for those living with arthritis. Information is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-800-283-7800 or www.arthritis.org.

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