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ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION CONVENES COUNTRY'S TOP RESEARCHERS FOR BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

*- Stem Cell, Cartilage Regeneration and B Cell Research
Promises to Revolutionize Arthritis Treatment -*

ATLANTA, April 20, 2007 – More than 200 leading researchers committed to discovering new technologies and therapies to prevent and treat arthritis will meet April 20 – 23 in Atlanta, GA, for the 2007 Arthritis Research Conference, organized by the Arthritis Foundation. Some of the most promising and innovative research to be presented at the conference pertains to using stem cells to advance cartilage regeneration for patients with osteoarthritis. Other exciting developments include new approaches to manipulating a special type of white blood cell known as the B lymphocyte in ways that can diminish inflammation in diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis.

“As the nation’s largest private, not-for-profit funder of arthritis research, this conference is very exciting for all of us here at the Arthritis Foundation,” said John H. Klippel, M.D., president and CEO of the Arthritis Foundation. “The three-day event is an opportunity for the best and brightest minds in arthritis research to develop research collaborations that will pave the way to a cure.”

Scientists predict that recent revelations in the area of stem cell research will lead to treatments that heal damaged cartilage and tissue, thereby greatly reducing or eliminating the number of joint replacement surgeries. Scientists hope introducing stem cells into areas where cartilage and tissue are already damaged may initiate a process of rebuilding healthy tissue and preventing further joint degradation. Many are optimistic that treatments using stem cells to ‘jump-start’ tissue regeneration will be available within the next decade.

One of the most significant advances in recent years has been the development of biologics – drugs which are based on substances produced by living cells. This is an important and very successful example of a class of biologic drugs that are now a common treatment for several types of arthritis. The class of biologics known as TNF inhibitors, block the action of one

the major mediators of inflammation in the body and have become important treatments for diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, and juvenile arthritis. TNF release results in inflammation of the joints in patients with the diseases noted above. Research sponsored by the Foundation is leading to therapies that can halt the chemical cascade that leads to TNF production at very early stages of these diseases. This approach can prevent the appearance of arthritis before any tissue damage can occur.

“Combining the best and brightest minds in arthritis research and advanced technologies for studying the cause of disease at its most basic levels is enabling great advances,” said Dr. John H. Hardin, chief scientific officer of the Arthritis Foundation.

The three-day conference begins at 10:00 a.m. Friday, April 20. Researchers from across the country will share research, best practices and theories that will propel the next generation of arthritis research. The conference consists of three primary sessions:

- Plenary Session: Translation in Arthritis Medicine
- Basic Science Symposium: Signaling and Regulation in the Joint
- Clinical Science Symposium: New Perspectives on Inflammatory Disease

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 number-one cause of disability. Founded in 1948, with headquarters in Atlanta, the Arthritis Foundation has chapters and 150 community 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 1-800-568-4045 or www.arthritis.org.