

Arthritis 101 | Follow Up Assignment

On February 13th, the Arthritis Foundation hosted a briefing on Capitol Hill to educate congressional staff about priorities important to Americans with arthritis.

We need your help to follow up with your member of Congress and their staff to make sure they receive important information about dedicated research funding at the Department of Defense.

Step One | Understand the Problem – Prevalence of Arthritis in the Military

Arthritis is the number one cause of disability among our military veterans and is the second leading cause of medical discharge from the U.S. Army. We know that 1 in 3 veterans lives with arthritis, a serious, chronic and complex disease that affects 1 in 4 Americans in the general population. Arthritis carries with it enormous physical, financial, and societal costs, but for veterans and service members, the costs are multiplied. Research supporting better prevention strategies, interventions and treatments is critical to reducing the number of service members and veterans suffering from arthritis.

WHY SERVICE MEMBERS ARE MORE PRONE TO ARTHRITIS

- Service members regularly carry 60- to 100-pound packs that can injure and weaken their joints
- Shock waves from blasts can cause early joint damage, leading to post-traumatic osteoarthritis (OA)
- Service members injured by roadside bombs and other blasts are often diagnosed with arthritis within 2-4 years of being injured, versus civilian injuries where onset usually occurs 7-10 years later
- Service members are often injured at a young age, which translates to more years of joint-related symptoms, activity limitations, and risks associated with medical procedures

CONSEQUENCES OF ARTHRITIS FOR VETERANS AND SERVICE MEMBERS

- In FY 2017, more than 8.4 million veterans received disability compensation for musculoskeletal conditions such as degenerative arthritis, post-traumatic OA, or limited range of joint motion – a nearly 50 percent increase over FY 2013 (5.7 million)
- A 2016 Arthritis Foundation analysis estimates lifetime health care and disability costs of nearly \$1 million for a U.S. Army soldier diagnosed with post-traumatic OA at age 24 (two years after a traumatic injury), who is discharged and requires knee replacement surgery in his or her thirties

Step Two | Understand the Solution – Dedicated Funding at the Department of Defense

Currently, arthritis and clinical care research on military personnel is limited with **no dedicated funding year to year**. Arthritis research that helps our military and veterans will benefit everyone with arthritis:

- Identify better joint injury management to reduce the effects of joint degeneration in this population
- Research dedicated to post-traumatic OA, for instance, can lead to the development of interventions at the time of injury that can mitigate the impact of arthritis, and possibly prevent it altogether
- Research on genetics and epigenetics of rheumatoid arthritis can help us understand what causes this inflammatory form of the disease and lead to more effective treatments with fewer side effects

We are calling on members of Congress to submit a letter of request to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense asking for a standalone arthritis program within the DoD Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP), funded at \$20 million.

Step Three | Target Your Audience

At the Arthritis 101 Briefing, 16 offices received this information directly. If you are a constituent of one of these members of Congress, please modify the email below to thank them for attending and then reiterate our ask for dedicated research funding at the department of Defense. If your member of Congress did not have representation, you can let them know about the briefing and share the relevant one pager using the draft below.

You can use either contact information that you have collected from your offices or the Action Center to send your messages to your members of Congress.

16 Offices attended this year's event including:

- Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS)
- Senator John Barrasso (R-WY)
- Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO)
- Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA)
- Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)
- Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO)
- Senator Bob Casey (D-PA)
- Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH)
- Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)
- Representative Kevin Hern (R-OK)
- Representative Andy Barr (R-KY)
- Representative Steve Chabot (R-OH)
- Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE)
- Representative Jim Langevin (D-RI)
- Representative Ron Kind (D-WI)
- Representative Chellie Pingree (D-ME)

Step Four | Draft Your Ask

Please remember to modify your letter with your personal story. If your member of Congress or their staff attended the event, please be sure your letter/phone script thanks them for making the time.

Subject: Sharing Important Information about Arthritis and the Military

Message Body:

My name is [name], I live in the great state of [home state], and I am an Arthritis Foundation Ambassador. Did you know that one in three veterans and service members in the United States lives with arthritis? Arthritis is a serious, chronic and complex condition that affects one in four Americans in the general population.

On February 13th, the Arthritis Foundation hosted a special briefing on Capitol Hill to educate congressional staff about priorities important to Americans with arthritis. I wanted to share the important resources discussed at the event with you and your team to ensure that you had the most up to date information about arthritis in the military, and what you can do to help. Click here to view the one pager, bit.ly/DODArthritisProgram.

Arthritis carries with it enormous physical, financial, and societal costs, but for veterans and service members, the costs are multiplied. Research supporting better prevention strategies, interventions and treatments is critical to reducing the number of service members and veterans suffering from arthritis.

Your office has the power to help. I urge you to submit a letter of request to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense asking for a standalone arthritis program within the DoD Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP), funded at \$20 million. Currently, arthritis and clinical care research on military personnel is limited with no dedicated funding year to year.

You can learn more about this ask by clicking here: <http://bit.ly/DODArthritisProgram>.

By Phone

- Hello. I am from [your state] and I am an Advocate for the 1 in 3 American veterans and service members that live with arthritis. I am calling today to urge [member of Congress's name] to support a standalone arthritis program within the DoD Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP), funded at \$20 million
- [Personalize with information about your arthritis story, and why this issue is important to you]

- Did you know that in fiscal year 2017, more than 8.4 million veterans received disability compensation for musculoskeletal conditions such as degenerative arthritis, post-traumatic OA, or limited range of joint motion – a nearly 50 percent increase over FY 2013 (5.7 million)?
- Currently, arthritis and clinical care research on military personnel is limited with no dedicated funding year to year.
- Dedicated research at the Department of Defense will not only help veterans and service members, but also all people with arthritis by helping to:
 - Identify better joint injury management to reduce the effects of joint degeneration in this population
 - Research dedicated to post-traumatic OA, for instance, can lead to the development of interventions at the time of injury that can mitigate the impact of arthritis, and possibly prevent it altogether
 - Research on genetics and epigenetics of rheumatoid arthritis can help us understand what causes this inflammatory form of the disease and lead to more effective treatments with fewer side effects
- Please consider submitting a letter of request to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense asking for a standalone arthritis program within the DoD Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP), funded at \$20 million.
- Thank you for all you do for our veterans and service members.

Step Five | Amplify Your Impact

Ask your friends and family to take action and make this same ask of Congress in five minutes or less through our pre-formatted action alert. Ask 3 people in your network to send a letter through our Action Center by sharing this short link with them.

bit.ly/DoDArthritisAsk2019