

## **Pharmaceutical innovation can help Canadians in pain – and the economy**

By Lisa M. Olson, Vice President, Immunology Discovery at AbbVie and Site Head at the AbbVie Bioresearch Center

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Rheumatoid arthritis can debilitate bodies and crush spirits. It can also place a significant economic burden on individual patients, their families and society. As the newest Canadian Members of Parliament take their seats to represent constituents' interests, this is an important time to recognize the need for continued medical innovation to help the many thousands of Canadians living with arthritis.

Arthritis is an umbrella term for conditions affecting joints and other tissues. It causes pain, restricts mobility, and diminishes quality of life. One form, rheumatoid arthritis (RA), is a chronic inflammatory disease that affects an estimated 300,000 Canadians—primarily women—including 1 in 136 Canadians of working age.

While there has been tremendous progress in the treatment of RA over the past two decades, more than two-thirds of treated patients still do not achieve clinical remission or low disease activity treatment targets. This means that many Canadians living with RA still suffer with pain, fatigue, morning joint stiffness and flares. We should not accept this status quo.

### **Rheumatoid arthritis can hurt the economy**

Although RA can affect people of all ages, the onset of the disease usually occurs between 30-50 years of age – when people are in their prime working years.

For people living with RA, the severity and duration of morning joint stiffness can significantly impact their potential to remain employed. Beyond missing work, up to one-third of patients can be work-disabled within two years of disease onset if the disease is not properly managed. Within 10 years of onset, approximately 50 per cent of RA patients in developed countries are unable to hold a full-time job.

RA comes with a large economic burden to individual patients, their families and to society, with an estimated total annual economic impact of \$2 billion in direct healthcare costs—which includes doctor visits and hospitalization costs—and over \$3 billion in wage-based productivity costs in Canada.

### **Too few people with RA achieve remission**

Over the past 20 years, significant advances have been made in treating RA. As a result, it is possible for people with RA to reach a state where the signs and symptoms

of inflammation, including joint pain, joint tenderness and morning stiffness are completely absent or rarely occur. This is called remission.

According to Canadian RA treatment guidelines, the goal of treatment is remission. Unfortunately, 70 per cent of treated patients do not achieve clinical remission or low disease activity targets. This is not acceptable.

Why is achieving remission so important? In addition to improving people's quality of life and helping them remain in the workforce longer, achieving remission is important because it's associated with significantly lower rates of hospitalizations, emergency room visits, mortality, and medical costs.

Whether it means returning to work, taking the kids to school, or going on a hike, achieving remission allows people living with RA to feel positive and return to living normal, productive lives. As Canadian Members of Parliament begin to identify their key priorities, it's important to remember the painful impact RA has on Canadians and consider how government policies can help support and encourage innovative research and development across Canada.

It's clear that additional therapeutic options are needed to increase remission rates for people with RA, and to fully address painful symptoms, which can still occur even in people who achieve low disease-activity targets.

### **The importance of treatment discovery and innovation**

As a research-driven biopharmaceutical company, AbbVie understands the importance of investing in ground-breaking science and technologies to help people live better lives. In 2018 alone, AbbVie invested \$5.1 billion into advancing research and development in immunology, neurology, virology, and oncology.

In our research, we strive to better understand difficult to treat diseases so that we may develop new and different treatment options.



**Lisa M. Olson** is Vice President, Immunology Discovery at AbbVie and Site Head at the AbbVie Bioresearch Center