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# JOHNSTON COUNTY Osteoarthritis Project Update

*Be a part of the search for the cure.*

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Issue 10

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## PROJECT UPDATE FROM THE DIRECTOR

JOANNE JORDAN, MD, MPH

As the Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project (JoCoOA) begins its 17th year, we are celebrating the recent discovery

of information that may prove, over time, to be important for understanding how people develop osteoarthritis and what makes it progress. This new information concerns how the mineral selenium and osteoarthritis are related to one another.

Low levels of selenium have been studied elsewhere and found to be associated with prostate cancer in men and a condition called Kashin-Beck disease which causes a form of osteoarthritis to start as early as childhood. JoCoOA studied a sample of 940 people who provided toenail clippings to measure their amount of selenium in the body and X-rays to determine the severity of their osteoarthritis. The results showed that people with lower levels of selenium had more severe osteoarthritis. In addition, even small increases in selenium appeared to reduce the risk of osteoarthritis.

Full understanding of how to apply this new information will require future study as we currently do not know what level of selenium

is best and because too much selenium can be poisonous. With this in mind, the results give us a new direction that no one has studied before and offer promise in our search for a cure and for ways to reduce the impact of osteoarthritis.

The Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project has started its next round of interviews with study participants. Our interviewers will be contacting you soon for a new set of home interviews, and a clinic visit. This time around, our clinic features exciting new technology that can map your footprint, showing the pressure points of each step you take!

We can't wait to see you!



*Our mission is to investigate the causes, consequences and treatments of arthritis and autoimmune diseases and reduce their impact on patients, their families, and society.*

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## Question and Answer

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**Q: How are the answers I give now compared to the answers I gave last time?**

**A:** For the purpose of our study, we look at how answers change over time, but we look at what has changed for the entire group rather than each person alone. Looking at the answers in this way helps us to see patterns associated with osteoarthritis. Sometimes we look at different age groups within the study since answers may be different for those who are older. We also look to see if men and women answer questions differently or if people of other races answer questions differently about their arthritis. People whose arthritis is not as bad are sometimes grouped together to see how their answers are different from those with arthritis that is worse. By making careful comparisons, we can be more confident that we do not come to the wrong conclusions.

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## A Tribute

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To a former employee and friend who is gone, but not forgotten:



**Wilma P. Howard**, a native of Selma, NC came to work with us at the research center at the young age of 80. She worked with us for a short 14 years out of her 70 working years. Wilma touched many lives. She was an inspiration to us all; at 80, she had more energy than most 40 year olds. Most of you met her as she was riding up and down your street making maps for the study. She wore many hats here, from mapping, recruiting, and home interviewing to asking questions at the clinic.

Wilma was always the first one to work even when she began using a walker. When Wilma was admitted to the hospital, she would insist that we bring work to her so that she would not get behind. She always had to stay busy, willing to help and up for anything you asked of her.

Wilma changed our views on what it meant to grow older. She taught us that we are never too old to learn and that every person is important. Wilma holds a special place in our hearts that will never be filled by another. She inspired us never to take a single day for granted and to be thankful for our blessings. We think of her often and miss her dearly.

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## Meet the Staff

The JoCoOA Project has been fortunate over the years to have dedicated and hard-working staff members. We are excited to start our 2nd Followup Phase with such a wonderful group of people.



**Janice Woodard - JoCoOA Project Director:** Janice has been with the Project from the start and has helped guide the Project from its humble beginnings to an internationally known research project.



**Linda Miles - Administrative Assistant:** Linda has kept the office running smoothly for 11 years. The interviewers depend on Linda for up-to-date information on the participants, clinic scheduling and various other duties.



**Georgene Capps - Interviewer and Lab Technician:** Georgene has been with us 9 years. She has worked in the clinic lab and has been an interviewer on several research projects.



**Traci Deese - Interviewer and Phlebotomist.** Traci has been with us for 3 years. She has many years of lab experience.



**Sue Guin - X-ray Supervisor:** Sue started taking x-rays for the Project in 1992 while she was working at Johnston Memorial Hospital. She joined the Project full-time in 2002. You will meet Sue in the x-ray station.



**Lynn Joyner - Interviewer and Clinic Examiner:** Lynn came to the Project in 2001 as an interviewer. After working in the clinic and as an interviewer, she joined the Project full-time in 2005. Lynn does the physical exam in the clinic and continues to interview participants.



**Annette Starling - Interviewer, Lab Technician and Clinic Examiner:** Annette has been with the Project for 4 years. Annette has also worked on various projects and now interviews and works in the lab at the clinic.



**Sally Thomas - Interviewer and Physical Function Examiner:** Sally has worked with the Project since 2002. She began on the ACE project and then moved to the JoCoOA Project. In addition to interviewing, Sally does the physical function station which includes the new Foot Mapping test.



**Nancy Wade - Interviewer and Bone-Density Operator:** Nancy came to the Project in 2001 as an interviewer. She has worked on the ACE project and now is on the JoCoOA Project. Nancy does interviewing and in the clinic she is our bone-density operator.

We hope you have enjoyed learning a little about our staff. They look forward to seeing you soon!

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### Never Too Old



## Johnston County Snapshots

Participant Lossie Rains (*left*) shows us that you're never too old to have fun or try new things as she skydives on her birthday. Participant Harvey Quinn (*right*) loves to ride, and so does his dog, Lady. They can be spotted traveling around the county together.

### Road Warrior



## Please remember to:

- Let us know if your address or phone number changes  
Call us at (919) 934-1295
- Visit our website: <http://tarc.med.unc.edu>

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