
J OHNSTON COUNTY Osteoarthritis Project Update

Be a part of the search for the cure.

Issue 11

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PROJECT UPDATE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Dear Friends,

As 2008 draws to a close, we are again celebrating success in our research. Using information from all of you here in

Johnston County, we have shown that one in two adults will develop painful knee osteoarthritis in their lifetime; for obese adults, that number rises to two in three people. To compare this to other diseases, this risk is much higher than the risk of getting diabetes, heart disease or breast cancer for women. In men, their risk of heart disease is somewhat higher than their risk of getting painful knee osteoarthritis, but the risks are still very high.

Our research has shown that a person's lifetime risk rises as body mass index (or BMI) increases. The BMI compares a person's weight to their height. Those whose weight was normal at age 18 but who become overweight or obese at age 45 or older are at the greatest risk. The results show how important weight management is for people throughout their lives. People who keep their weight within a normal range are much less likely to develop painful knee osteoarthritis as they get older and much less likely to need major medical procedures, such as knee replacement surgery.

The lifetime risk is a commonly used way to tell the public what their personal risk of developing a specific disease is. Lifetime risk estimates for many different diseases have been known for many years, but up until now, the risk of osteoarthritis was not known. We are the first research study to release a lifetime risk assessment for osteoarthritis, and we could not have done it without you, the generous people of Johnston County. We would love to show you our appreciation; please join us for our Open Houses in Smithfield again this December.

We are continuing our current round of revisiting everyone who has been in the study. We have seen almost 1,000 of you over the past year or so, some of you for the 3rd time. If you haven't heard from an interviewer yet, someone will be contacting you soon for a new set of home interviews, and a clinic visit.

We can't wait to see you!



UNC
THURSTON ARTHRITIS
RESEARCH CENTER

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.

Question and Answer

Q: I am in my late 50 s and have one leg about % an inch shorter than the other. Will this increase my chances of having arthritis in my knees or hips?

A: People with a difference in leg length may be more likely to have hip and knee osteoarthritis than people with legs of equal length. Researchers and doctors do not yet know whether the length of your legs causes you to get osteoarthritis or to have it get worse. Research is being done to help answer this question. The use of shoe lifts and orthotics to correct a difference in leg length may help people with hip or knee osteoarthritis, but future studies are needed to test whether these treatments can prevent the onset of osteoarthritis or its progression.

Q: I have noticed as the arthritis in my hip gets worse, over the years I am taking shorter steps. Would arthritis cause me to take shorter steps?

A: People with arthritis of the hip or knee may take shorter steps to attempt to reduce pain. Shorter steps may decrease the forces going through their joints with walking, reducing their arthritis symptoms. Additionally, people with arthritis in their knees and hips may have decreased range of motion in their joints due to swelling and stiffness of their joints and muscles. The limited range of motion in the hip or knee joints can shorten step length. Stretching exercises, strategies to protect and care for joints, or physical therapy may help maintain or improve exibility and range of motion.

Outstanding Work

We are proud to announce that Linda Miles (below) of Princeton was voted unanimously by her co-workers as Employee of the Year. Linda is the Administrative Assistant for the Project and has been with us for 10 years. She has many duties, including keeping track of more than 3,000 Johnston County residents that have participated in the Osteoarthritis Project for almost 20 years. She is an extremely hard worker and very pleasant to both the participants in the Project and to her co-workers. She was honored with a plaque, owers, and a luncheon at the Cracker Barrel in Smith eld. Congratulations Linda!



Open Houses



Ruth Ray of Selma (left), was one of many participants who won a door prize at the Johnston County Osteoarthritis Project Open Houses at our clinic in Smith eld at the end of 2007.

Please join us for Open Houses this year!

They will be held on December 9th and 10th, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM at our Clinic in Smith eld, 1327 N. Brightleaf Blvd., Building G, Noble Plaza.

Focus Groups

A new research project, **Individual and Community Determinants of Osteoarthritis Outcomes**, is currently underway in Johnston County. Led by Dr. Leigh F. Callahan and Dr. Joanne M. Jordan, this project will look at the relationship between the community and Johnston County residents health.

Six discussion groups were held at the Rural Health Research Center during the months of June and July 2008, and 37 community members with osteoarthritis participated in these talks. These participants shared the available community resources that help them to manage their arthritis. They also told the researchers what resources were needed in Johnston County that would help them better manage their arthritis. In addition, the participants used a map of Johnston County to mark areas where they get medical care and physical activity, do shopping, work/volunteer, and visit with family and friends. This activity helped to

understand where resources are located throughout the county.

The information gained from these discussion groups will help to inform the development of a community characteristic checklist. Members of the Rural Health Research Center team will drive through Johnston County during the upcoming fall and winter months and use the checklist when touring neighborhoods. This list will record the features of Johnston County townships that may offer benefits to those with arthritis, such as parks, handicapped parking at stores, and services such as pharmacy delivery and senior center programs.

The research project hopes to then take the findings to local business and government leaders, highlighting helpful community characteristics and those characteristics that need improvement, so that Johnston County residents with arthritis are able to better manage their health.

Hearing From You



Leo Stewart, Benson

Being in the study has been a very pleasant experience. The interviews were done in an orderly and timely way. Everyone treated me with respect. The time went by quickly, as I moved from one place to the next on my clinic day. Having transportation provided was the only way I could get to the clinic in Smithfield.



Gennive Walden, Benson

The arthritis study has helped me be more aware that I can never give up, even though my arthritis is painful and keeps me from doing all the things I would like to do. I was very impressed with the staff and appreciate the kindness I was shown. Thank you for providing transportation as well. I hope to continue participating, and together we will find a cure.

