

NEWS

Contact:
Lucy McDonald
Brand Resources Group, Inc.
703-739-8343

NEW RESEARCH SHOWS PROMISE FOR FINDING A CURE FOR RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

The American College of Rheumatology Research and Education Foundation's Within Our Reach Campaign Yields Significant Advances in Detecting, Treating and Understanding RA

ATLANTA, GA (September 3, 2008) For the first time during its unprecedented initiative to find a cure for rheumatoid arthritis, the American College of Rheumatology Research and Education Foundation is releasing new information acquired from research funded by the *Within Our Reach: Finding a Cure for Rheumatoid Arthritis* campaign.

Doctors and scientists from across the nation are utilizing more than \$12 million in grants awarded by the ACR REF to investigate critical issues including early detection of RA, novel treatment pathways as well as improved patient-provider interaction and patient care. While research is still underway, the REF is encouraged by the progress made thus far and is pleased to announce the new and promising knowledge which RA researchers will continue to build upon as studies continue.

"The REF is committed to funding RA research that is not being done elsewhere, and supporting scientists and doctors who are most prepared and motivated to work on finding a cure," said Leslie J. Crofford, MD, president of the REF. "The quality and value of the studies in progress is evidence that the *Within Our Reach* campaign is critical and must continue."

Viewed as one of the most disabling types of arthritis, RA affects nearly 1.3 million Americans. But, because of rapidly advancing research into the fundamentals of inflammation, the outlook for those suffering from RA has improved dramatically over the past 25 years. Recent advances in treatment have made it possible to stop, or at least slow the progression of joint damage. Additionally, new therapies that target inflammation are being developed.

Today the *Within our Reach* campaign is supporting 30 innovative research studies and highlights of new information gained from select studies include the following:

New Treatment Pathways

A study led by Dr. Gary Firestein at the University of California School of Medicine in San Diego focuses on how the central nervous system can control inflammation, a chronic, damaging and painful symptom of RA. The study is the first to identify a new pathway that allows the spinal cord and brain to decrease joint inflammation and joint destruction. Now that this pathway is identified, new therapies can be developed to utilize it and mimic the anti-inflammatory effects of the central nervous system.

Early Detection of RA

Successful management of RA requires early medical intervention and a new study led by Dr. Antony Rosen at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine seeks to identify specific pathways that drive RA development and generate tissue damage. Dr. Rosen and his team of researchers are working to define new blood tests to help rheumatologists diagnose RA in its early stages, which will improve their ability to monitor disease activity and prevent early RA from amplifying.

Health Literacy and Patient-Physician Interaction

Dr. Edward Yelin of the University of California, San Francisco is leading the most systematic attempt to understand the role that patient-physician communication and health literacy play in understanding disparities in RA treatment and healthcare outcomes for different patient populations. This study compares standard measures of disease activity such as degree of joint damage, with assessments of socioeconomic status such as income, education level and employment status, race/ethnicity of the patient and the language spoken at home to explain disparities in care and treatment of RA.

About *Within Our Reach: Finding a Cure for Rheumatoid Arthritis*

Rheumatoid arthritis affects an estimated 1.3 million Americans, yet funding to find new treatments and ultimately a cure remains significantly low compared to other autoimmune diseases. To address the critical need for additional funding and research support, the REF launched *Within Our Reach* in November 2006.

Within Our Reach is the largest private fundraising campaign in the REF's history. It will tap a diverse donor base, and raise \$30 million to accelerate the innovative research necessary to find a cure for RA. The campaign has received tremendous support from the pharmaceutical industry, biotech companies, physicians and patients, raising more than \$18 million to date.

"The *Within Our Reach* campaign is designed to accelerate research to better understand and ultimately find a cure for RA," said Dr. Crofford. "The information gleaned from the research grants underway has provided solid information for researchers to build upon as the campaign continues."

To learn more about rheumatoid arthritis and the campaign, please visit www.WithinOurReach.info.

About ACR Research and Education Foundation

The ACR Research and Education Foundation was established in 1985 as a 501(c)(3) with a mission to improve patients' lives through support of research and training that advances the prevention, treatment and cure of rheumatic diseases. Since its founding, the REF has promoted and advanced the field of rheumatology by funding research, training and education opportunities for clinicians, students, health professionals, researchers and academic institutions. On average, 90 cents of every dollar donated to the REF is used to fund its extensive award and grant program.

###