



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF RHEUMATOLOGY
RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Celebrating **25** Years

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REF RAISES NEARLY \$28 MILLION AND FUNDS \$24 MILLION IN INNOVATIVE RA RESEARCH

With the support of its Pinnacle Donors, the REF aims to reach its \$30 million goal

ATLANTA – The American College of Rheumatology Research and Education Foundation today announced it has raised nearly \$28 million, and funded \$24 million, in RA research through its *Within Our Reach: Finding a Cure for Rheumatoid Arthritis* campaign – putting the Foundation two million from its initial \$30 million goal.

Arthritis and the rheumatic diseases strike an estimated 46.4 million Americans and is the most common cause of chronic disability in the United States. The social and economic burden to our nation is considerable, with estimated costs of annual medical care and lost earnings at \$128 billion. Rheumatoid arthritis— long feared as one of the most disabling types of arthritis— is the most common form of inflammatory arthritis, affecting more than 1.3 million Americans. Although RA is a disease which can strike anyone—men, women, even children—of any race, at any stage in life, about 75 percent are women. RA is not brought on by injury or aging, it is a disease which develops because certain cells of the immune system malfunction and attack healthy joints. Despite its prevalence, RA receives disproportionately less federal research funding than most other autoimmune diseases.

“The REF noticed that RA was not receiving the kind of funding needed to properly fill the gap and launched *Within Our Reach* to address this,” explains REF President, E. William St.Clair of the multi-year campaign. “The Foundation is 53 months into the campaign and has funded the research of 54 investigative teams working on the innovative RA research that will move the treatment of this disease forward.”

The American College of Rheumatology and several industry leaders took early notice of the importance of this type of research initiative and supported the campaign at the Pinnacle Level with donations of \$5 million.

As the campaign’s first Pinnacle-level donor, The American College of Rheumatology made an early statement that this type of initiative is important to the rheumatology community, and the College continues to view this campaign as an important part of the RA research puzzle. “The ACR’s mission is to advance rheumatology, and supporting campaigns like *Within Our Reach* falls in line with this mission. It is a ground-breaking effort to stimulate novel ideas in RA research that may result in improved outcomes for our patients. Hopefully this effort will result in an overall increase in RA research funding for investigators,” says ACR president Stanley B. Cohen, MD.

Among the industry leaders who have become early Pinnacle donors is Abbott, who sees the great strides that can be made in RA research and treatment through the campaign. “Medical research has significantly advanced rheumatoid arthritis treatment,” says the company’s Divisional Vice President of Immunology Development, John R. Medich, PhD. “Because of new treatments, many people with RA are living pain-free, productive lives and feeling better than we could have imagined just a decade ago. Our hope is that through the continued advancement of medical science there will be a way to prevent this debilitating disease one day.”

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"The objectives of *Within Our Reach* are consistent with our company's mission to help patients prevail over serious diseases," says Michael Corbo, vice president and development team lead of Pinnacle donor, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. "Bristol-Myers Squibb is proud to support broad-based, innovative programs such as *Within Our Reach*, which addresses the continuum of RA research—from initial scientific exploration of the causes of RA to targeted treatments. We believe the best approach to helping patients and their families fight against RA is to invest in understanding the causes and course of this complex and devastating disease."

UCB, a biopharmaceutical company with U.S. operations in Atlanta, is another Pinnacle donor that is involved for similar reasons. "As a patient-focused company, we feel it is important that we join in the challenge of finding a cure for this disabling disease," said David Robinson, vice president and general manager of UCB Pharmaceutical's Immunology Business. "UCB is committed to providing solutions for patients needs and with the federal funds dedicated to RA research dwindling, this donation will help fund the vital research that will benefit all RA patients."

Highlights of several *Within Our Reach*-funded studies will be presented during a special session on November 8 at the American College of Rheumatology Annual Scientific Meeting in Atlanta. To learn more about *Within Our Reach* and the research being funded, visit www.WithinOurReach.info.

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The ACR Research and Education Foundation was established in 1985 as a 501(c)(3) organization with a mission of advancing research and training to improve the health of people with rheumatic diseases. Over the last decade, the REF has grown to become the premier private source of funding for rheumatology training and research in the U.S. On average, 90 cents of every dollar donated to the REF is used to fund its extensive core awards and grants program. For more information, visit www.rheumatology.org/REF.

The *Within Our Reach* campaign, launched in 2006, is the largest private fundraising campaign in the REF's history. With an initial goal to raise \$30 million, *Within Our Reach* will 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 nearly \$28million to date. To learn more about rheumatoid arthritis and the campaign, visit www.WithinOurReach.info.