Arthritis screening and support program to be delivered by pharmacists at Shoppers Drug Mart

Pharmacists at more than 1200 Shoppers Drug Mart stores will now offer free arthritis screening and information to their patients under a new program launched by the company, the federal health minister and arthritis partners in Toronto, on September 9, 2013.

“We are pleased to have funded research that contributed to the development of this innovative new program that will improve the quality of life of Canadians living with arthritis,” said Minister of Health, Rona Ambrose, in a joint government-company news release.

The research behind the screening program was carried out at the Arthritis Research Centre of Canada (ARC), with federal funding provided through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The program, led by Dr. Carlo Marra (Professor, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of British Columbia and *CPJ* Editorial Board member), was based upon the PhIND-OA and PhIT-OA studies that were conducted in community pharmacies in British Columbia and Alberta. Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE) is another partner in the initiative.

The program includes a self-administered joint exam and questionnaire for patients, and

pharmacist monitoring of patients’ symptoms and medications.

The ArthritisID screening exam is designed to promote early diagnosis, which experts say is critical to slowing the progress of arthritis, described as a significantly underdiagnosed and undertreated disease.

“Pharmacists are a key member of an arthritis patient’s health care team,” said ACE founder and president, Cheryl Koen in the news release. “Now, Shoppers’ pharmacists will be able to share valuable arthritis information and detect or confirm arthritis with patients through innovative consumer education programs right at the pharmacy counter.”

An estimated 4.6 million Canadians have arthritis and 2 out of 3, or 2.8 million, are women. The 3 partners conducted a national survey of more than 1000 women with arthritis and used their findings to develop program components targeted specifically at women with the disease.

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