



Simple Tasks

CAMPAIGN FACT SHEET

Campaign Overview

The **Simple Tasks** campaign is designed to educate lawmakers, administration officials, think tanks, advocacy groups, physicians and physician groups about the value of rheumatology.

The Diseases

Rheumatic diseases are autoimmune and inflammatory diseases that cause the immune system to attack a person's joints, muscles, bones and organs. Rheumatic diseases are often lumped under the term 'arthritis – a term used to describe over 100 diseases and conditions. Under this umbrella term, there are over 30 inflammatory rheumatic diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, gout, scleroderma, juvenile idiopathic arthritis, Sjogren's syndrome, spondylarthritides, polymyalgia rheumatica, and several forms of systemic vasculitis (including giant cell arteritis). And, this list doesn't include the most common form of arthritis, known as osteoarthritis, which is due to breakdown of bone and cartilage in joints rather than inflammation.

The Numbers

- **Millions of American Adults** suffer from inflammatory rheumatic diseases; 1.3 million adults have rheumatoid arthritis; 161,000 to 322,000 adults have lupus.
- **Hundreds-of-Thousands of Children.** Nearly 300,000 American children suffer from rheumatic diseases, the most common of which is juvenile idiopathic arthritis, which can cause the same type of pain, disability and co-existing diseases that adults with rheumatic diseases often experience. It is estimated that one child in every 250 will develop some form of rheumatic disease.
- **1 in 12 Women.** 8.4 percent of women will develop a rheumatic disease during their lifetime. Women are 2 to 3 times more likely to be diagnosed with RA, and 9 of every 10 lupus patients are women.
- **1 in 20 Men.** 5 percent of men in the U.S. will develop a rheumatic disease during their lifetime.
- **Strike in the Prime of Life.** Inflammatory rheumatic diseases often strike people in the prime of their lives. For example, RA and lupus often develop between the ages of 20 and 40.
- **\$127.8 Billion.** The latest figures regarding arthritis and other rheumatic diseases show that they led to \$127.8 billion in medical costs in the U.S. and more than the \$124 billion in costs for cancer care.

The Personal Toll

- **Pain and Deformity.** Rheumatic diseases can cause deformities so severe that those who suffer from them cannot bathe or dress themselves, and everyday activities such as walking can cause pain and be difficult or even impossible.
- **Organ damage.** Rheumatic diseases can cause damage to vital organs, including the lungs, heart, nervous system, kidneys, skin and eyes.
- **Disability.** Rheumatic diseases cause work limitations for 30 percent of people with them and, with arthritis, are a more frequent cause of activity limitation than heart disease, cancer or diabetes.



Campaign Fact Sheet

Disability is even higher among patients with inadequately treated RA – with 60 percent being unable to work 10 years after the onset of their disease.

- **Death.** In their most severe form, rheumatic diseases can lead to life-threatening infections (such as pneumonia), and people suffering from them are at significantly higher risk for developing other associated diseases including heart disease, stroke and cancer. For example, people with RA are twice as likely to die as people of the same age without RA in the general population. Without adequate therapy, the average life expectancy for a patient with RA may be shortened by 3-7 years. As treatment for rheumatoid arthritis has improved, however, severe disability and life-threatening complications have decreased considerably and many people live relatively normal lives.

The Window of Opportunity

- **Window of Opportunity.** The first weeks and months following the onset of rheumatic disease symptoms are known as the “window of opportunity,” and it’s crucial that patients get appropriate treatment in that time period to avoid long-term complications. Treatment early in the disease — even within the first 12 weeks for some of them — can prevent damage to joints and other organs, improve long-term function, and increase the likelihood of achieving disease remission.

Why a Rheumatologist is the Solution

- **They Are the Experts in Rheumatic Diseases.** Rheumatologists are specialists in diagnosing, managing and treating arthritis and rheumatic diseases. By virtue of their training in internal medicine, and then advanced specialized education in rheumatic diseases, they are uniquely qualified to deal not only with arthritis, but to recognize and treat the wide array of symptoms from rheumatic diseases that can affect almost any organ in the body. Rheumatologists are the experts in the diagnosis and treatment of all manifestations of these diseases.
- **Benefits of Appropriate Treatment.** When appropriate treatment is started early, medical costs, disability and work limitations due to rheumatic diseases can all be reduced.

