

ARTHRITIS in Georgia Senior Centers

what is arthritis?

■ Technically, arthritis is inflammation of the joint or joints; in practice, it commonly includes more. There are more than 100 different types of arthritis and while all do not cause inflammation of the joints all do share the ability to cause pain, aching, or stiffness in or around the joints. Proper diagnosis and management can prevent or reduce the effects of arthritis, such as disability and pain. People with joint problems need to understand their condition and actively participate in disease management to maximize quality of life.

source of information

■ As part of the Arthritis Validity Study in 2000 -2001, the Arthritis Foundation, Georgia Chapter and Division of Public Health collected secondary data among selected senior centers in Georgia. Senior participants from 12 senior centers were examined by a rheumatologist, a physician specializing in arthritis treatment, and after the exam, answered additional questions about their health. Information in this summary is based on arthritis exam results and additional information from 487 participants.

ARTHRITIS among senior center participants

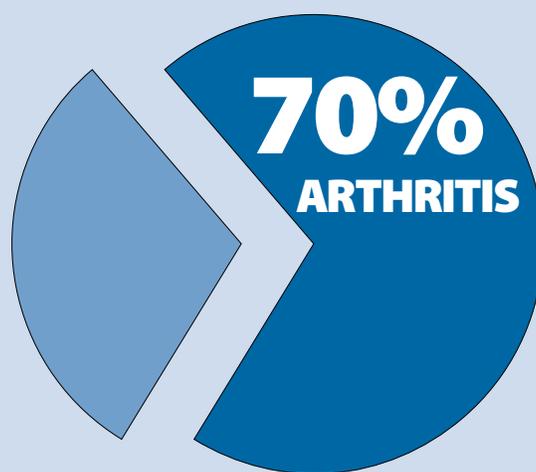


figure 1

Arthritis is a major public health issue among study participants, affecting 70% of those who participated.



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arthritis awareness

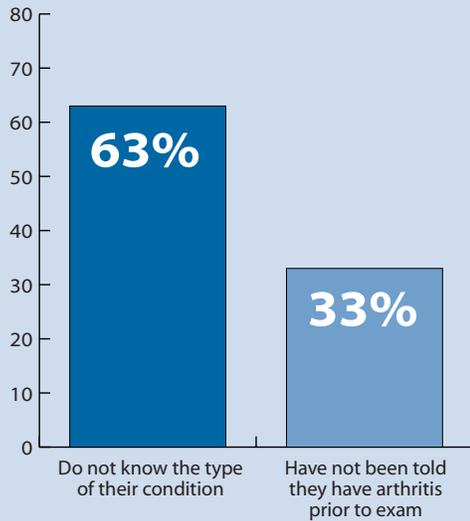


figure 2

Among senior participants with arthritis, 63% did not know what type of arthritis they had. Also, prior to their exam, 33% of those with arthritis had not been previously told they had arthritis by a health care professional.

arthritis treatment and care

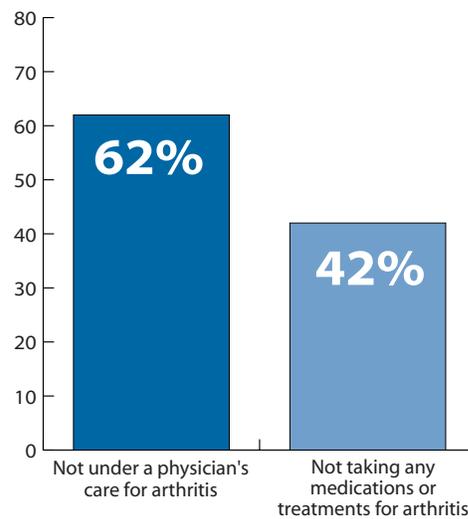


figure 3

Among those with arthritis, 62% were not currently under a physician's care for arthritis. In addition, 42% were not currently taking any medications, therapy, or treatment for their arthritis.

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DEFINITIONS

ARTHRITIS • Rheumatologist-diagnosed arthritis as asked on exam form for the BRFSS - Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Arthritis Validity Study: Does this person have arthritis or a related condition?

TECHNICAL NOTES

The results from this study only reflect findings from 12 selected senior centers in Georgia. They do not represent all senior center participants, nor all older adults in Georgia. Self-reported participant information is from the Participant Form for the BRFSS Arthritis Validity Study.

Bombard, Jennifer. "Arthritis in Georgia Senior Centers, Arthritis Foundation, Georgia Chapter, April 2003."

Footnote A - "Figures 1 - 3 denote figures based upon senior center participants in the 2000 - 2001 Arthritis Validity Study." Footnote B - "Figures 4 - 5 denote figures based upon senior center participants with and without arthritis in the 2000 - 2001 Arthritis Validity Study."

activities of daily living

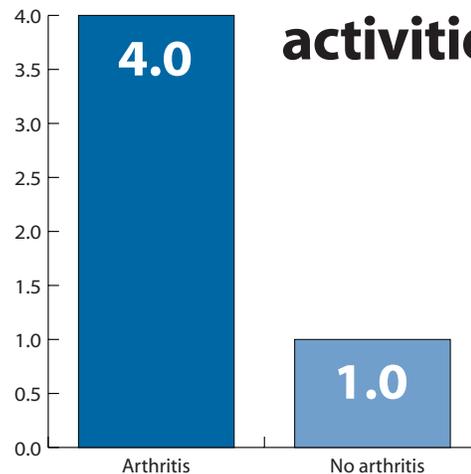


figure 4

Activities of daily living include a list of 20 activities such as climbing 5 steps, bending down, standing up from a chair, etc. Senior participants with arthritis reported some level of difficulty with an average of 4 activities. This was 4 times what senior participants without arthritis reported.

joint pain

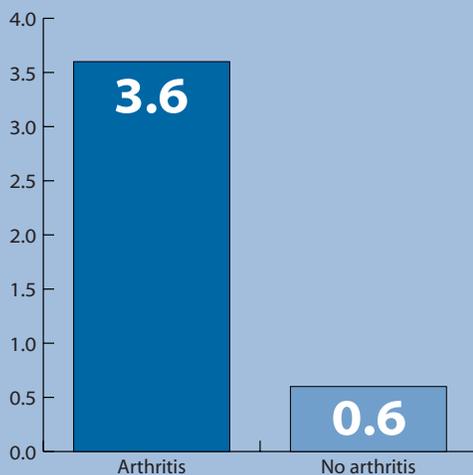


figure 5

Arthritis can cause pain. Senior participants with arthritis reported experiencing a pain level 6 times that of senior participants without arthritis.

This information further indicates that although treatments are available and can help-and in some cases cure-certain types of arthritis, some senior center participants with arthritis are experiencing unnecessary pain and disability because they do not know enough about their disease and are not receiving arthritis-related health care.

Also, arthritis has an effect on daily life, and ability to perform regular activities. Pain experienced can also affect a person's ability to function. Currently, arthritis is a leading cause of disability, and limitations in activity for the general population are expected to increase from the current 2.8% of the U.S. population to 3.6% of the population by 2020.