

Giving People With Rheumatoid Arthritis A Hand

(NAPSA)—There is now hope to reduce and help prevent the crippling effects of rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a chronic condition that afflicts millions of Americans.

The Arthritis Foundation recently made available an educational tool that provides valuable tips for people who think they might have RA. The brochure highlights the latest advances in diagnostic testing for this debilitating disease. In particular, it features a new screening tool, the Rheumatoid Arthritis Diagnostic Panel from Quest Diagnostics. This panel allows health care providers to determine with nearly 100 percent accuracy if a patient has RA.

RA is a disease characterized by pain, stiffness and swelling in the joints. If not caught early, the disease can lead to irreversible joint destruction.

“Health care providers must have access to a highly specific and sensitive tool to diagnose RA in the early stages before the disease progresses,” said Joyce Schwartz, M.D., Vice President and Chief Laboratory Officer of Quest Diagnostics. “An accurate diagnosis gives physicians the ability to identify RA and initiate, if necessary, aggressive treatments at an earlier stage in the disease. The use of aggressive therapy early on may significantly reduce disease progression and joint damage.”

The Rheumatoid Arthritis Diagnostic Panel examines rheumatoid factor (RF) and anti-cyclic citrullinated peptide (anti-CCP), two antibodies that are present in the blood and indicative of RA. These antibodies are measured in a laboratory after a patient goes



to the doctor to have a blood sample drawn.

“Evidence gained from testing for RF in combination with anti-CCP provides clinicians with powerful information to help them diagnose this serious condition,” said Dr. Schwartz.

Historically, physicians have diagnosed RA through the sole use of RF testing and clinical evaluation based on disease classification criteria developed by the American College of Rheumatology. Unfortunately, symptoms typically associated with this serious condition, including nodule development and bone erosion, are rarely recognized in the early stages. Research supports the use of testing for RF in combination with anti-CCP, to meet the need for a sensitive and highly specific test to diagnose RA. A positive anti-CCP measurement provides the best information about eventual disease severity.

The brochure is available on the Arthritis Foundation’s Web site at www.arthritis.org/afstore. For more information on the Rheumatoid Arthritis Diagnostic Panel, visit www.questdiagnostics.com/RApanel.