

Take Back Control From Rheumatoid Arthritis

New Program Called *Turn The Tide*[™] Provides Comprehensive Resources On RA [®]

(NAPS)—Do you or someone you know have rheumatoid arthritis (RA) but need more information? A new program called *Turn the Tide* is helping people with RA take back control of their lives by providing free comprehensive educational and motivational programs and services. *Turn the Tide* provides people with RA and their friends and family members the opportunity to seek advice from experts, learn about updates on research and gain insight from others who are successfully managing their RA.

Programs and services offered through *Turn the Tide* vary in topic and how they are accessed. These include:

EDIT RA[™] (Early Diagnosis, Intervention, and Treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis), a series of seminars sponsored by Aventis Pharmaceuticals and local Arthritis Foundation chapters.

RAwatch, an interactive Web site (www.RAwatch.com), that includes a chatroom, discussion board and the latest information on RA.

RAAdvice Series, brochures written by experts in different specialties, who provide advice and guidance in the areas of exercise, occupational therapy, nutrition, rights in the workplace, and maximizing the benefits of health insurance.

The **Patient Advisory Council**, a volunteer group designed to help ensure that RA receives the attention it deserves from those responsible for the national health agenda.

“It can be devastating when things you used to easily do, like brush your hair or get dressed, become painful chores. Just knowing that others have overcome the same problems, can be inspirational for battling this disease,” said Christine Hogue, who has suffered from RA for five years. “Programs like *Turn the Tide* are a tremendous help for people with RA, because they provide access to information and resources all in one place.” In Christine’s case, her personal triumph includes running the Arthritis Foundation’s ‘Joints in Motion’ marathon in Hawaii.

One of the most common forms of arthritis, RA is a chronic and often crippling disease affecting over two million Americans, 70 percent of whom are women. It tends to persist for many years, typically affecting many different joints throughout the body, and can cause damage to the bone, cartilage, tendons and ligaments of the joints.

The goal of *Turn the Tide* is to educate people with RA about the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of the disease. Damage to the joints begins within the first two years of the disease and

early treatment with proper medication can slow or prevent long term damage.

“Rheumatoid arthritis can be very disabling especially if not properly managed. Because much of the joint damage typically happens in the first two years, it is critical that we treat patients early, to do all we can to stop RA from getting worse,” said Michael Schiff M.D., Medical Director of the Denver Arthritis Clinic Research Unit.

Although there is no cure for RA, there is hope. Research is underway that might someday lead to a cure. Today, there are medications available to help slow the progression of the disease, control symptoms, like pain and swollen joints, and allow people to continue to lead active lives. Rheumatologists (doctors who specialize in treating RA) now often recommend early treatment with medicines called disease modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs), because multiple studies suggest that early use of these drugs offers important benefits for people with RA.

Combining the benefits of proper medication and the resources like those available through *Turn the Tide*, people with RA can begin to take back control of their lives. For more information on *Turn the Tide* call toll-free, 1-800-716-7168 or log on at www.RAwatch.com.