

Health Bulletin



World's Largest Arthritis Study Seeks Patients

(NAPSA)—The world's largest arthritis study is seeking patients to help compare the effects of a new investigational medication with those of two commonly used arthritis drugs.

The study is for people age 50 or older with osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis. Called TARGET (Therapeutic Arthritis Research & Gastrointestinal Event Trial), the study will enroll more than 18,000 patients from over 800 centers worldwide.

The study will evaluate the safety, tolerability and efficacy of an investigational medication compared to that of two well-known arthritis drugs, ibuprofen and naproxen. People whose condition qualifies them for the trial and who enroll will be provided free study medication and study-related care for a year.

Osteoarthritis affects nearly 21 million Americans and is characterized by the breakdown of joint cartilage. This condition causes the affected bones to rub against each other, deforming the bones and creating inflammation that leads to pain and loss of movement. It can affect hands, knees, hips, feet and the back. Risk factors associated with osteoarthritis include accidents, age, joint injuries, obesity and work-related activity.

By age 65, more than half of Americans have x-ray evidence of osteoarthritis in at least one joint and that number will increase as the baby boomer generation ages. Unfortunately, no cure has been found to treat this devastating



By age 65, more than half of all Americans show signs of osteoarthritis.

disease. Some people switch arthritis medications as often as every three months.

Many arthritis patients experience difficulty functioning and find their ability to perform simple tasks such as getting out of bed, writing, sewing, preparing meals, sleeping and walking, impaired, because of joint pain, stiffness or loss of motion.

The economic impact of osteoarthritis is astounding. Arthritis is the leading cause of disability in the United States and musculoskeletal diseases, including osteoarthritis, cost the nation nearly \$65 billion each year in direct expenses, lost wages and production. Osteoarthritis, alone, accounts for more than seven million physician visits per year.

To find out if you qualify for the TARGET study, call, toll free 866-4-OA-TRIAL (866-462-8742). TARGET is sponsored by Novartis, a pioneer in the development of safe and efficacious treatments for arthritis and pain.