

## MEDIA RELEASE

**EMBARGO: 5 September 2018,  
8.30am**



**ARTHRITIS  
NEW ZEALAND**

KAIPONAPONA AOTEAROA

*Our Vision: Improving the life of  
every person affected by arthritis*

*Ko tō mātou aronga: Kia whakapiki  
i te oranga o te hunga kua pāngia  
e te mate kaiponapona*

## **Arthritis report finds significant impact on working age population**

**EMBARGO: Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 8.30am**

A major report on the economic cost of Arthritis in New Zealand will be launched in parliament on Wednesday September 5th by Arthritis New Zealand. The findings in the report have major implications for how arthritis is managed in the health system. In particular, it shows that arthritis is a growing health issue for people of working age and it also has a significant impact on Māori and Pacific.

There are 647 000+ people with arthritis in New Zealand, and 48% of those are of working age. Days lost due to sick leave amount to a total of about one million workdays lost in 2018 due to arthritis in New Zealand.

**The report shows that there are increasing numbers of people being diagnosed with arthritis and the number is projected to be one million by 2040.**

The *Economic Cost of Arthritis in New Zealand* is a report commissioned by Arthritis New Zealand to research the financial cost of arthritis. It highlights the staggering expenses associated with the direct, indirect, and for the first time, wellbeing costs of arthritis.

The total economic and wellbeing costs are estimated to be \$12.2 billion in 2018, of which over \$1.2 billion are production losses from the working age group that directly impact New Zealand's gross domestic product, and a further \$1 billion is spent on healthcare. Almost \$8 billion is lost through reduced quality of life from disability and premature mortality.

Osteoarthritis is the most prevalent form of arthritis in New Zealand, followed by gout arthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Gout arthritis is relatively more prevalent in the Māori and Pacific populations. The prevalence of gout in the young Māori population is higher than for the non-Māori population, suggesting that gout arthritis is a significant health issue for the Māori population as it is associated with heart disease, diabetes and joint damage. This has implications for how services for this group are planned and delivered.

It is also evident that Northland, Mid Central and the West Coast have the highest prevalence rates of osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout arthritis. MidCentral, Bay of Plenty and the West

Coast has the highest rate of osteoarthritis, Whanganui has the highest rate of rheumatoid arthritis and the highest prevalence of gout arthritis is in Tairāwhiti, Whanganui and Northland.

Arthritis New Zealand is proposing some solutions to government for more effective management of arthritis so that lives can improve, and costs reduced. A focus on cost-effective interventions for arthritis such as those targeted at reducing obesity, continued investment in research and development, and self-management education, are important to minimise costs and improve wellbeing.

One solution is to implement a Model of Care that includes preventative programmes, early diagnosis, early treatment, ongoing management, and advanced stage care and surgery, as well as effective treatment and management of gout arthritis.

**“The findings in this report present a clear picture of the overwhelming impact that arthritis has on the New Zealand economy. Measures need to be put in place to prevent its impact spiralling out of control in future. There will be a 30% increase in the number of people who have arthritis in the next 20 years. Over a million New Zealanders will have arthritis by 2040,”** said Arthritis New Zealand CE Philip Kearney.

**“We are developing solutions to combat the future economic cost of arthritis in New Zealand and thereby help improve the quality of life for those affected by arthritis.”**

**Arthritis New Zealand wants to establish a national Model of Care for people with arthritis with emphasis on gout arthritis. This would engage community and service providers to promote good management of gout arthritis with a focus on Māori and Pacific communities who have some of the highest prevalence rates.**

**The aim of the Model of Care will be to increase the number of people on a managed gout arthritis programme from the current level of 45% to 90% by 2040.**

**“Such a programme has the potential to save over \$2.1 billion per year and would be a significant step in recognising the social and economic costs of arthritis and recognise it as a serious public health issue,”** concluded Mr Kearney.

**Key points in the report to be released tomorrow include:**

- **The overall cost of arthritis in New Zealand is \$12.2 billion a year.**
- **48% of people with arthritis are of working age.**
- **The most prevalent forms of arthritis are osteoarthritis, gout arthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.**
- **By 2040 one million New Zealanders will have arthritis.**
- **A national Model of Care for arthritis needs to be developed.**
- **Māori and Pacific men have a higher prevalence of gout arthritis.**

The Executive Summary of the report is attached to this press release.

Caption for attached photograph: Arthritis New Zealand National Governing Body President Peter Larmer and Chief Executive Philip Kearney.

The launch will be held in the Great Hall at Parliament Buildings Wednesday September 5<sup>th</sup> at 7.30am

ENDS

**For more information or a copy of the Report, contact:**

Joanne Taylor

Communications Coordinator

Arthritis New Zealand

DDI 09 523 8903

Mobile 027 226 6625

Email : [joanne.taylor@arthritis.org.nz](mailto:joanne.taylor@arthritis.org.nz)

Philip Kearney

Chief Executive

Arthritis New Zealand

DDI 04 472 5641

Mobile 027 419 8946

Email: [philip.kearney@arthritis.org.nz](mailto:philip.kearney@arthritis.org.nz)



**About arthritis:**

Arthritis affects more than 647,000 New Zealanders of all ages including children and young people. Arthritis New Zealand aims to improve the life of every person affected by arthritis. We are a national charity focused on raising awareness, advocating for those with arthritis and providing advice and support. For more information, phone the helpline 0800 663 463, or visit [www.arthritis.org.nz](http://www.arthritis.org.nz)

**Details:**

W: [www.arthritis.org.nz](http://www.arthritis.org.nz)

T: 0800 663 463

E: [info@arthritis.org.nz](mailto:info@arthritis.org.nz)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/arthritisnewzealand](http://www.facebook.com/arthritisnewzealand)

Twitter: @ArthritisNZ