

## **Arthritis consumers contribute expertise to research decision-making**

By: Colleen M. Maloney

Arthritis consumers broadened their involvement from arthritis patient self-management and medical professional education in British Columbia last year to take on research. Consumers on the Arthritis Research Centre of Canada's (ARC) Consumer Advisory Board (CAB) jumped into the deep end when they committed their time and personal expertise to contribute to research decision-making.

Determined to bring the consumers' perspective to research matters related to prevention, treatment and self-management of arthritis, CAB members bobbed to the top through a sea of medical specialties, scientific terminology, research summaries and administrative policies and procedures. In the capacity of expert consumers, they individually and collectively serve as a bridge between researchers, people with arthritis, and the community.

During the past six months CAB members were at "pool-side" contributing to a number of ARC research proposals at the developmental stages. Some of the proposals are confidential, while others are not. They include Fatigue versus energy – what's the difference and how is it measured; Arthritis in the work place – finding common ground to stay employed; Wait lists for hip and knee arthroplasty – what are the effects on quality of life? CAB members are also involved with reviewing research summaries. Working with researchers they created a summary template to aid project team members in disseminating their findings on the ARC website. Relaying the information in language consumers comprehend is paramount to understanding the intricacies of arthritis, the disease process, self-management and obtaining consumer support.

Who are these CAB members? The CAB is comprised of volunteer advocates from diverse backgrounds and age groups who have a wide range of arthritis diseases. They are people like you who believe that their participation in research decision-making is critical to creating a world without arthritis. The research scientists they work with believe it too. They are committed to *practical research for everyday living* for Canadians with arthritis.

To expand participation in research decision-making, CAB is recruiting new members to its Board. You are invited to apply. Visit ARC at [www.arthritisresearch.ca](http://www.arthritisresearch.ca) to review the advances being made in arthritis diagnosis, prognosis, prevention, care outcomes and quality of life issues. Then contact [cabrecruitment@arthritisresearch.ca](mailto:cabrecruitment@arthritisresearch.ca) to receive an application and information pamphlet. Wade in. The water is warm.