

Knowledge Exchange Task Force

By: Doris Ward, Communications Manager, Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis

Ottawa, November 5, 2004 - The Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (IMHA) of The Canadian Institutes of Health Research held the inaugural meeting of its Knowledge Exchange Task Force (KETF) on Friday, Nov 5 with a presentation by Dr. Sandra LeFort who shared the results of her Chronic Pain Self Management Program (CPSMP).

The Knowledge Exchange Task Force (KETF) is a pilot project designed to proactively accelerate the translation and exchange of new research knowledge among clinicians and consumers for the benefit of both parties. Through this process, the KETF hopes to work towards improving the health of all Canadians.

"Today, smack dab in the middle of the Bone and Joint Decade, the burden of illness of musculoskeletal (MSK) diseases is still a well kept secret - \$16.4 billion per year," said Dr. Cy Frank, IMHA's scientific director. "Our goal is to establish a group of Research Ambassadors who will help build a bridge to enhance knowledge and understanding with the ultimate spin off effect of increasing research and decreasing the burden of illness of MSK diseases and conditions."

Attending the kickoff dinner held prior to the KETF meeting, the Honorable Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell, MD, echoed Dr. Frank's comments noting that, "I am truly touched that the World Health Organization chose the first decade of the 21st century as a 10-year period to be dedicated to Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis. This is a world-wide recognition of the fact that a very high percentage of all citizens will suffer pain and a loss of their full possibility of participating in life because of these diseases. During this decade, I hope that great progress will be made in the prevention and treatment of musculoskeletal diseases and arthritis for our youngest and our oldest citizens."

Living with chronic pain is a common experience for those suffering from the broad array of diseases that exist under the MSK umbrella such as arthritis, osteoporosis, lupus and muscular dystrophies. Chronic pain can result in severe distress and disability and can have a negative impact both physically and economically on an individual and his/her family.

"Individuals living with a chronic illness need to be active participants in the management of their conditions," said Barbara Grimster, a lupus patient and Board member of Lupus Canada. "Living with lupus is one thing, 'living well with lupus' is another. Empowering patients to be part of the entire research process is timely and imperative."

To address this issue, Dr. LeFort has developed a low-cost, accessible, community-based education program that can give people the skills and confidence to better manage their chronic pain. "The two studies I conducted have tested the effects of this program and have shown positive results," said LeFort. "However, the next step is working with groups and health care agencies to make sure that programs like these are available to the people who need them wherever they live in Canada."

Following Dr. LeFort's presentation, the group broke out to discuss what the study meant to them, how the information could be shared and who it should be shared with. As the result of their discussions, the KETF made the following observations:

- Dr. LeFort's research has broad applications in chronic pain management for many health conditions (IMHA and beyond) and KETF can drive that process.
- Messages must be tailored to meet the needs of specific audiences, taking into account Canada's cultural diversity.
- A paradigm shift is needed in knowledge exchange (and KETF is the model).