

Arthritis Continues as Most Common Cause of Disability

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that arthritis or rheumatism continues to be the most common cause of disability in the United States, affecting an estimated 8.6 million persons. The U.S. Census Bureau along with CDC analyzed the most recent data from the 2005 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), which is a longitudinal panel survey that represents the civilian non-institutionalized population living in the United States. While the prevalence of disability remained unchanged from 1999 (22.0%) to 2005 (21.8%), the absolute number of persons reporting disability increased 7.7% due to the large group of aging baby boomers born during 1946 – 1964. After arthritis, back or spine problems (7.6 million) and heart trouble (3.0 million) are the next two most common causes of disability.

The need for effective strategies and interventions aimed at preventing progression to disability and improving disability management in the population has never been greater. Modifiable lifestyle characteristics such as physical inactivity, obesity and tobacco use are major contributors to the most common causes of disability. Programs including the Arthritis Foundation Life Improvement Series empower people with arthritis through aquatic, exercise and self-help programs that are proven to increase mobility and reduce pain, stiffness and physician visits for people who participate in these informative group programs. We will need even greater numbers of trained professionals to expand the reach of effective community-based programs to mitigate the effects of disability from arthritis or rheumatism.

Full Article:

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) - *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2009 May 1; 58(16):421-426. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5816a2.htm>