

# Utah Health Status Update:

## Primary Care Providers' Knowledge, Attitudes and Awareness Regarding Patient Arthritis Self Management

February 2004

Utah Department of Health

### Description

The Utah Arthritis Program (UAP) previously conducted research about arthritis knowledge, attitudes and beliefs in women aged 40-64. A key finding was that these women viewed physician recommendations as critically influencing their own decisions regarding the use of arthritis resources and the Arthritis Foundation Self-Help Course (ASHC). The women further stated that their medical providers offered little information about these resources. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to assess the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of medical providers with respect to these arthritis resources.

### Methods

Focus groups were used to gain qualitative information from a randomly selected sample of Utah's primary care providers. From this information, a mail survey was developed and utilized in a random sample of Utah primary-care providers.

**Focus Groups:** Five, two-hour focus groups comprised of Utah primary care providers including nurse practitioners (NP), physician assistants (PA), and physicians were conducted (using a trained facilitator): two with NP's and PA's (18 total participants) and three with physicians (20 total participants). The NP and PA groups were composed primarily of females (67%) and most had practiced medicine for less than 10 years (83%). The physician groups were composed primarily of males (85%) and most had practiced medicine for over 10 years (70%).

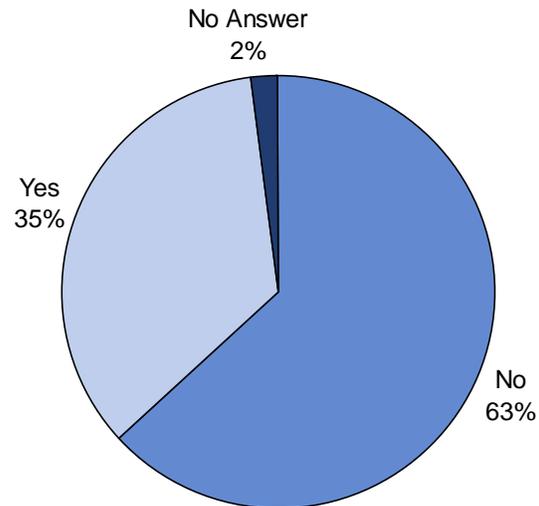
**Survey:** A mail survey was sent to a random sample of 567 primary care physicians. Of those, 158 surveys were completed and returned (27.8% return rate). Twenty-one percent of those who completed the survey were female and 79% were male. Of the survey respondents 54% had been in practice for over 15 years, 20% 10-15 years, 17% 5-10 years, 7% 3-5 years, 1% 1-3 years and 1% less than one year.

### Results

**Focus Groups:** The primary findings were that the participants: 1) had a very low "top of mind" awareness of arthritis resources; 2) felt

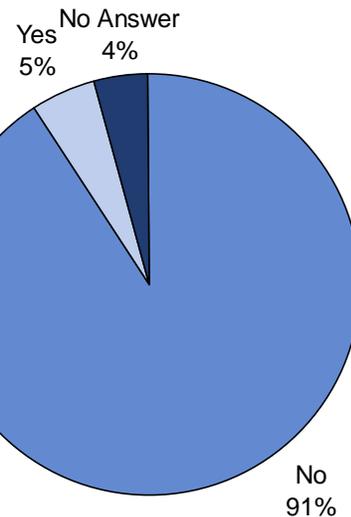
### Awareness of Community Arthritis Resources

Figure 1. Are you aware of arthritis resources available for your patients in your community? (n=154 survey respondents)



### Awareness of What Health Departments Have to Offer

Figure 2. Are you aware of the services the State and/or Local Health Departments have to offer persons with arthritis? (n=149)



“hopeless” about treating those with arthritis; 3) had a desire for additional information about resources that could assist their patients, and 4) would be more likely to recommend the ASHC if they received positive feedback from patients who had taken the course. As noted, these

findings were used to develop and refine the survey tool.

**Survey:** The mail survey findings concur with the focus groups in two areas: 1) participants had a very low “top of mind” awareness of arthritis resources, and 2) participants had a desire for additional resource information to assist their patients. Survey participants differed from the focus group participants in that they did not report feeling as “hopeless” with respect to effectively treating patients. The survey respondents did state that they would recommend a program if they saw evidence it was effective and the cost was reasonable. Some also mentioned availability, safety, and legitimacy as important factors.

The majority of providers were unaware of community arthritis resources (Figure 1), and what local health departments in Utah offered with respect to arthritis resources (Figure 2), and didn’t know of the UAP.

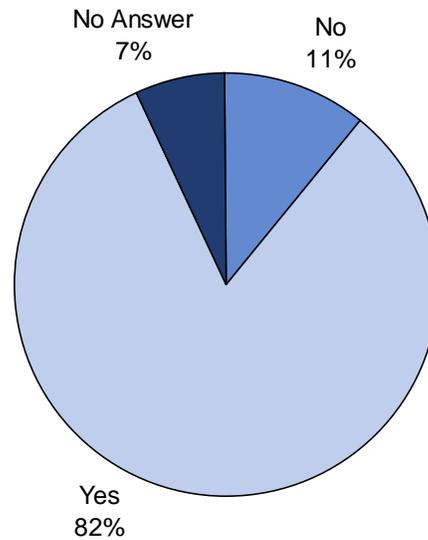
However, respondents did have an overwhelming desire for additional information about resources that could assist their patients (Figure 3) and many are interested in developing or increasing partnerships with the UAP (Figure 4).

### Conclusions

The results of this study suggest low provider awareness of local arthritis resources, including resources offered by the Utah Department of Health and the Arthritis Foundation. These findings support the conclusions of the previously conducted focus groups. The respondents’ desire for information and community resources, and their interest in partnering with the Utah Arthritis Program, demonstrates the potential for partnership and quality improvement initiatives. The Utah Arthritis Program will work with providers and the Arthritis Foundation, Utah/Idaho Chapter, to identify appropriate partnerships and interventions. Also the UAP will work with the Arthritis Foundation to coordinate efforts to increase general community awareness about these resources.

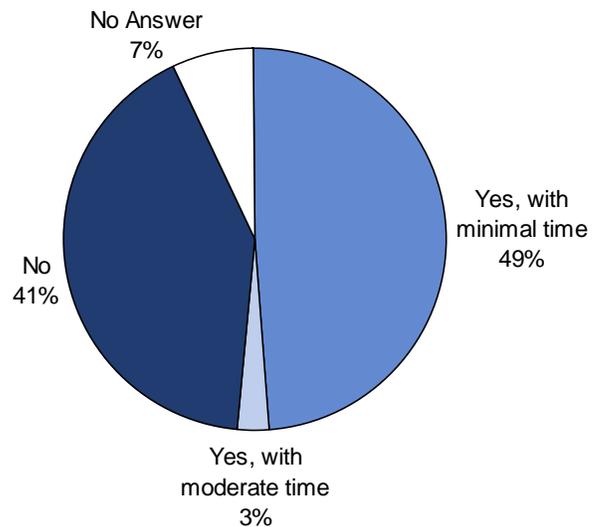
### Interest in Additional Information

Figure 3. Would you be interested in learning about what the Arthritis Foundation can offer your patients? (n=146)



### Interest in Partnership

Figure 4. Would you be interested in partnering with the Utah Arthritis Program and/or the Arthritis Foundation to provide arthritis information/services to your patients? (n=144)



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