



## **Increasing Participation in Arthritis Self-Management Programs, Partnering With Health Care Organizations**

### **Public Health Problem**

Arthritis is one of the most common health problems in the United States, with 49 million adults having doctor-diagnosed arthritis in 2001—nearly 1 of every 4 adults. An additional 21 million Americans reported chronic joint symptoms. Arthritis limits everyday activities for more than 8 million U.S. citizens, making it the leading cause of disability in the United States. In Utah, 291,000 adults had doctor-diagnosed arthritis in 2001, and an additional 180,000 adults reported chronic joint symptoms. Self-management programs, such as physical activity and self-management education, can reduce the pain and disability of arthritis, yet less than 1% of people with arthritis have participated in such programs.

### **Program Example**

Utah has increased the number of people who participate in arthritis self-management programs by working with health care providers to increase public awareness of the importance of self-management and the availability of self-management programs. The Utah Arthritis Program and The Orthopedic Specialty Hospital partnered to deliver free arthritis education seminars in communities. At these seminars, participants receive basic information about arthritis and self-management techniques as well as an opportunity to evaluate their own arthritis-related needs. Participants are then referred to arthritis programs, including the 6-week Arthritis Self-Help Course, the Arthritis Foundation's People with Arthritis Can Exercise (PACE<sup>®</sup>) program, and aquatics physical activity programs. Of the more than 300 people attending these seminars, 20% have taken another step to better manage their arthritis by enrolling in a physical activity or arthritis self-management education program. The Utah Arthritis Program has been approached by other clinical providers wanting to launch similar efforts.

### **Implications and Impact**

Utah's efforts show how a successful partnership can increase participation in arthritis self-management programs that have been proven to improve quality of life for people with arthritis. Free community seminars increased people's awareness and use of physical activity and self-management education resources. Utah's experiences can be a model for other states wanting to improve quality of life for people with arthritis by increasing participation in these effective arthritis interventions.

### Contact Information

Utah Department of Health • Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Control • Arthritis Control Program  
P.O. Box 142107 • Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-2107  
Phone: (801) 538-9291 Fax: (801) 538-9495 • Web site: <http://health.utah.gov/arthritis>