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Arthritis Rate Here Tops National Average
Finding Comes from Data Supplied by HARC

(PALM DESERT, CA) – The widely heralded healing powers of the warm, dry desert air have long attracted people facing various medical challenges. If research released by HARC, the Palm Desert-based Health Assessment Resource Center, is any guideline, many of those individuals may be arthritis sufferers.

In its groundbreaking 2007 survey of health conditions across Eastern Riverside County, HARC discovered that 24.8%, or 135,614 adults have been told by a doctor, nurse, or other healthcare professional that they have arthritis. Of those diagnosed, 79,424 – or nearly 3 out of 5 residents – reported that their medical caregiver suggested physical exercise to help improve their condition. The numbers – which dovetail with May being national Arthritis Awareness Month – are especially concerning because they prove to be higher than the national average.

For example, data collected by the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) between 2003-2005, reveals that approximately 22% of all adults, or 46 million individuals nationwide, have self-reported doctor-diagnosed arthritis. The NHIS further estimates approximately 25%, or 67 million adults aged 18 and older, will have arthritis by 2030.

Glen Grayman, MD, Board President of HARC, stated, “The national numbers suggest that we’re losing ground in the overall fight to curb this often painful health problem. However, I am hopeful that with increased awareness, our residents will take steps to see a doctor and get the very best medical care that’s available to them.

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Arthritis is a rheumatic disease characterized by inflammation of joints and accompanied by pain and stiffness around the joints and connective tissue. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), arthritis is the most common cause of disability in the United States.

When taking race, age, and gender into account, HARC's historical data reveals that Caucasians are over three times more likely to report an arthritis diagnosis than Hispanic/Latinos. The occurrence of arthritis in Eastern Riverside County is greatest among those 75 years and older. The HARC study also revealed a higher proportion of women, as compared to men, has been diagnosed with the condition.

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About HARC

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 30 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in eastern Riverside County every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501©3 organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities who contract with the agency for customized public health research. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760) 404-1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.harcddata.org.