**Arthritis and associations with chronic conditions**

**Key Findings:**
- Respondents with arthritis were significantly more likely than respondents without arthritis to report having diabetes, asthma, other respiratory conditions, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, or a disability.
- Respondents with osteoarthritis were significantly more likely than respondents without osteoarthritis to report having diabetes, asthma, other respiratory conditions, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, or a disability.
- Respondents with rheumatoid arthritis were significantly more likely than respondents without rheumatoid arthritis to report having diabetes, asthma, other respiratory conditions, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, or a disability.

**Introduction**

This brief report is designed to profile key epidemiological information on the prevalence of arthritis and associated chronic conditions in South Australia (SA). Such information will aid regional health planners and community health workers to make evidence-based decisions about future service provision and interventions for achievement of better health outcomes among people in South Australia.

**Data Sources**

The South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System (SAMSS) is a monthly telephone monitoring system which has been in operation across the state since July 2002. Approximately 600 Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) are conducted each month using a random selection of telephone numbers from the Electronic White Pages (EWP) directory. Personal interviews are conducted for people aged 16 years and over and an appropriate surrogate respondent is interviewed for infants and children under 16 years. Data are weighted by age, sex, area and probability of selection in the household to reflect the population of SA. This analysis was based on n=16,218 respondents aged 18 years and over who provided a response to the questions “Have you ever been told by a doctor that you have arthritis?” for the period of July 2003 to June 2006.

**Prevalence of Arthritis in South Australia**

The overall prevalence of arthritis among those aged 18 years and over (n=16218) for the period of July 2003 to June 2006 was 21.9% (95% CI 21.2-22.5).

When compared to respondents without arthritis, those with arthritis were statistically significantly (χ² test, p<0.05) more likely to report having:
- Diabetes (12.5%),
- Asthma (16.4%),
- Other respiratory conditions (such as emphysema, bronchitis, or chronic lung disease) (9.3%),
- Cardiovascular disease (18.1%),
- Osteoporosis (11.9%), or
- Disability (their activities were limited due to an impairment or health problem) (46.8%).

**Figure 1. Prevalence of chronic conditions in respondents with arthritis compared to those without arthritis, 18 years and over**
Prevalence of osteoarthritis (OA)

The overall prevalence of osteoarthritis (OA) among those aged 18 years and over (n=16218) for the period of July 2003 to June 2006 was 11.1% (95% CI 10.6-11.6).

When compared to respondents without OA, those with OA were statistically significantly ($\chi^2$ test, p<0.05) more likely to report having:
- Diabetes (12.8%),
- Asthma (17.5%),
- Other respiratory conditions (10.0%)
- Cardiovascular disease (19.9%),
- Osteoporosis (16.3%), or
- Disability (50.1%).

Conclusions

Approximately one fifth of the population of South Australia reports that they have been told by a doctor that they have arthritis. Associated with this were significantly higher levels of co-morbidity with other chronic conditions. These results highlight that monitoring of arthritis on an ongoing basis in South Australia and examining the associations with other chronic conditions is important to assess the impact of the condition on the community over time, assist in policy development and improve treatment outcomes.

References