



## *The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010* **PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **World Arthritis Day Highlights Burden Among Policy-Makers**

**12 October 2009 | LUND (SWEDEN)** -- Every year on October 12<sup>th</sup> people from around the world join together to raise awareness of arthritis, a disease that affects millions of people, both young and old, globally. This year on the occasion of World Arthritis Day in Europe a high-visibility campaign will be launched at the European Parliament, Brussels, which seeks to generate change in arthritis healthcare policies.

The campaign, Working Wonders, is a photo exhibition featuring 15 people with rheumatic diseases at work and tells their inspiring stories. This coincides with the launch of the European Interest Group on Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Diseases. Earlier this year the Charter for Work for People with Rheumatic Diseases was launched. The Charter recognises the role of policy makers, healthcare providers, employers in creating a working environment that is inclusive of people with rheumatic diseases. The Working Wonders exhibition is a powerful testimony that it is beneficial for the whole of society to keep people with a rheumatic disease in work. The Working Wonders exhibition will be displayed at the European Parliament for the event of World Arthritis Day. Please see <http://www.worldarthritisday.org/eular.php>

Prof Anthony Woolf, member of the Bone and Joint Decade International Steering Committee, and rheumatologist from the Royal Cornwall Hospital in the UK, said: "Musculoskeletal disorders are the leading cause of disability and time off work for sick leave around the world. World Arthritis Day aims to raise awareness of the vast burden of arthritis amongst the general public, and essentially to influence public policy by educating decision-makers about the steps which can be taken to ease this burden."

#### **Some facts about Arthritis:**

- Several hundred million people worldwide already suffer from osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, and this figure is set to increase exponentially due to the predicted doubling of the number of people over age 50 by the year 2020.
- Arthritis is the leading cause of disability in the United States and account for half of all chronic conditions in persons age 65 and over.
- Osteoarthritis affects over 135 million people worldwide. It is the fourth most frequent cause of health problems in women worldwide and the eighth in men.
- Rheumatoid arthritis affects over 20 million people including children worldwide.

Launched in January 2000, the Bone and Joint Decade is an NGO comprised of National Action Networks in 65 countries and with the support of more than 750 related organisations globally. Its mission is to advance understanding of musculoskeletal disorders worldwide through research and to improve the quality of life for those affected. The Bone and Joint Decade initiative works closely with the United Nations and the World Health Organization. For more information, please see [www.bjdonline.org](http://www.bjdonline.org).

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