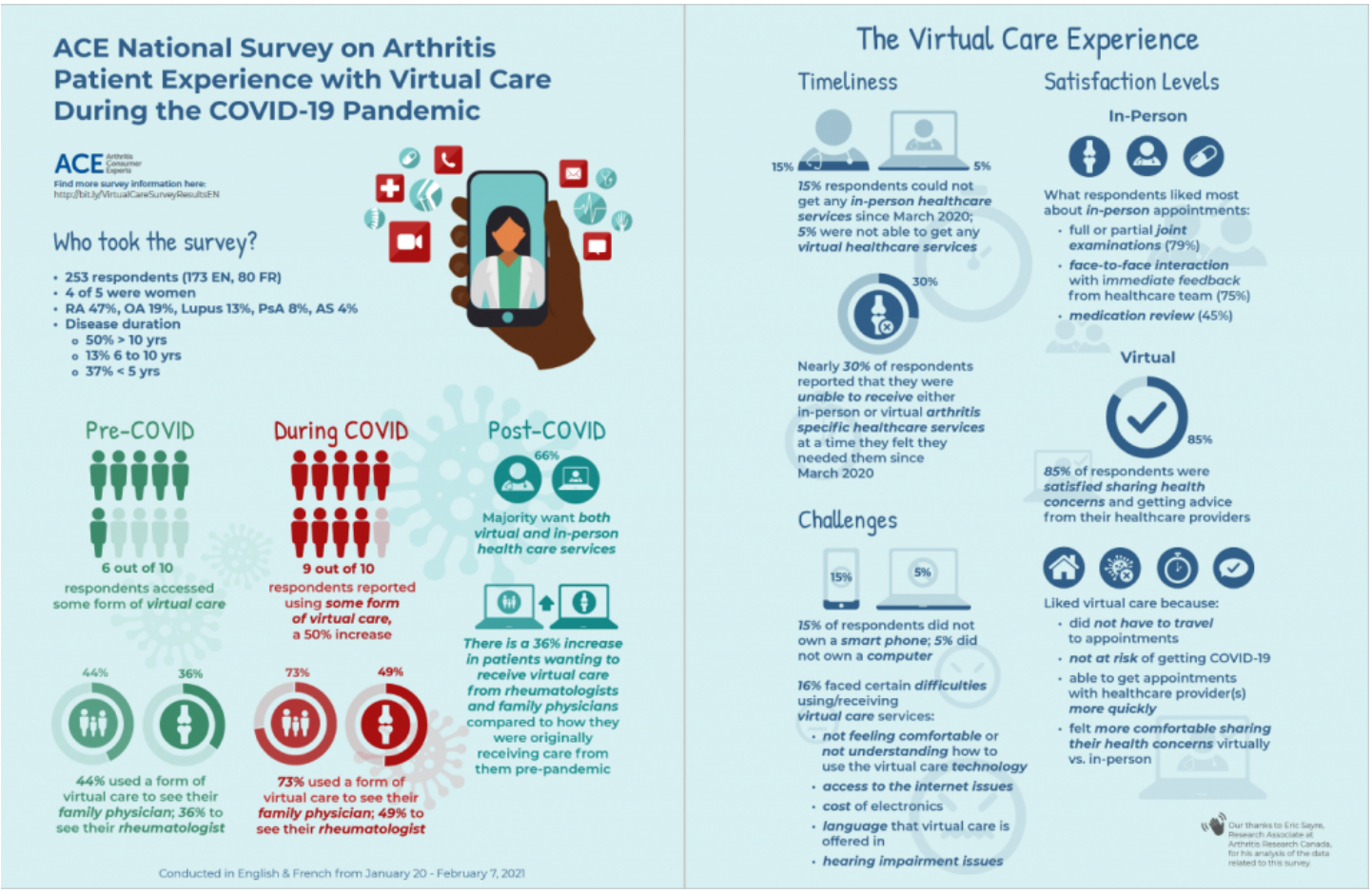
New Arthritis Consumer Experts survey reveals patient satisfaction with virtual care during pandemic

Arthritis patients prefer a mix of in-person and virtual care services post-pandemic



British Columbia, Vancouver, Apr 23, 2021 (Issuewire.com**)** - The results of a new survey released by Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE) reveal that virtual care has been an important form of healthcare delivery from family doctors and rheumatologists for many people living with arthritis before and, increasingly, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, arthritis patients' satisfaction with virtual care was high and appeared to be equal to standard face-to-face encounters with rheumatologists or family physicians.

ACE's survey also confirms arthritis patients would like to continue having the option to access virtual care even when the pandemic is over. Specifically, respondents stated they would like greater access to virtual care than they were originally receiving pre-pandemic key healthcare providers like family doctors and rheumatologists. A majority of arthritis patients reported their preference for a mix of in-person and virtual care services, with a preference of in-person for more complex examinations such as joint counts, and virtual consults to augment care (e.g. in-between visits or to support patient self-care).

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"An important consideration based on our survey is that although the level of satisfaction was generally

high with virtual care, arthritis patients did identify a number of difficulties that they are experiencing when it comes to accessing virtual care. These challenges include access to the internet, cost of electronics, and lack of translation services and collectively act as barriers to meaningfully accessing and benefitting from virtual care," said Cheryl Koehn, President, and Founder, Arthritis Consumer Experts.

Based on these survey results and an arthritis patient preference for a mixed-use of in-person and virtual care, ACE calls upon governments across Canada to acknowledge that it should be a shared decision with patients as to whom and when is it most appropriate to provide virtual care. Moving forward, more research must be done to better understand patient preferences for virtual care as it may not be acceptable for all patients.

About the Arthritis Consumer Experts National Survey on virtual care for people living with arthritis

The survey was open from January 20, 2021, through to February 7, 2021, and was open to people living with arthritis. It contained 23 questions and was developed using the online survey platform, Survey Monkey. Respondents required internet access in order to complete the survey. Arthritis Consumer Experts received 253 responses for the community-led survey, 173 in English and 80 in French.

Respondents were patients living with different forms of arthritis, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, lupus, juvenile idiopathic arthritis, fibromyalgia, Sjögren's syndrome, scleroderma, vasculitis, adult-onset Still's disease, and uveitis. The three most common forms of arthritis among respondents were rheumatoid arthritis (accounting for almost half of the respondents), osteoarthritis (19%), and lupus (10%).

About Arthritis Consumer Experts

Arthritis Consumer Experts (ACE) is a national organization that provides free, science-based information and education programs to people with arthritis. ACE serves people living with all forms of arthritis by helping them take control of their disease and improve their quality of life through education and empowerment. Founded and led by people with arthritis, ACE also actively advocates on arthritis health and policy issues, through ACE's JointHealth™ family of programs and the Arthritis Broadcast Network, directly to consumers/patients, healthcare professionals, media, and government. ACE is guided by a strict set of guiding principles, set out by an advisory board comprised of leading scientists, medical professionals, and informed arthritis consumers.

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