

Shifting Perceptions of Rheumatoid Arthritis in the Workplace: Press Release



Eli Lilly Canada and Women in Biz Network Partner to Shift Perceptions of Rheumatoid Arthritis in the Workplace

A series of local events and career progression resources to support women living and working with a chronic disease

TORONTO, October 12, 2018 – “I look healthy, even when I’m in pain,” says Maya Joshi, a student and part-time professional who is living and working with rheumatoid arthritis. “That makes it even harder to speak up and ask for accommodations in public or professional settings—especially when rheumatoid arthritis isn’t widely known of or understood.”

Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a chronic autoimmune disease that affects women two to three times more often than men. While the disease can occur at any age, its onset is most common between the ages of 40 and 60, which is often the prime of people’s careers.

To recognize World Arthritis Day, Eli Lilly Canada and Women in Biz Network are launching a series of inspiring public networking events across the country. The ***RA Matters at Work*** events aim to encourage people living with RA to speak up about their difficulties and triumphs, and to challenge the negative beliefs and self-doubt associated with living and working with a chronic disease.

For many people living with RA, career continuation and advancement can seem out of reach. Eli Lilly and Company recently conducted one of the largest-ever international studies of RA, with more than 5,000 people living with the disease. The study revealed that almost half of respondents felt their career progression slowed, and some were even forced into retirement due to RA.¹

“The *RA Matters at Work* series of events is designed to connect women living with arthritis, so they can share their experiences navigating health issues in

the workplace and raise awareness and support so that all women can thrive in their careers,” says Leigh Mitchell, President and Founder of Women in Biz Network. “Our mission is to help all women succeed in their careers, and we value the opportunity to facilitate an open dialogue with likeminded women on issues of empowerment and advancement, no matter the obstacles they face.”

RA Matters began as an innovative crowd-sourced survey of real-life experiences of RA, exploring what matters most to people with RA in terms of work, activities, aspirations, and personal relationships. Its format has been expanded, to include this series of panel discussions and web-based education. The content of *RAMatters.ca* will expand next month to include RA management resources including videos and stories by Canadians living with RA, and by experts who treat and help manage the disease and its chronic effects.

With an inaugural event in Vancouver, followed by events in Toronto and Montreal, the *RA Matters at Work* events will feature inspirational role models from the local community who maintain demanding lifestyles, both at work and at home, while living with RA. They’ll provide expert insight and debunk beliefs that people with a chronic disease cannot maintain a successful career.

The audience at Vancouver’s event will also hear from Dr. Diane Lacaille, who is a senior research scientist at Arthritis Research Canada. She says “When you speak to people with rheumatoid arthritis about the activities they value, they often say they prioritize work. But for people living with RA, even simple daily tasks like turning a doorknob or using a computer mouse can be painful. What matters to people living with RA is that this disease doesn’t prevent them from staying employed and living a fulfilling life. This is possible with support from employers, co-workers, family and their health care team.”

Lisa Matar, President and General Manager of Lilly Canada, says “We want to help women with RA and other chronic diseases—have the confidence to take on their goals without hesitation. At Lilly, we know companies are stronger when employees can bring their best selves to work. That’s one reason we’re proud to be partnering with Women in Biz Network on this series of events.”

About Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease characterized by fatigue, pain, inflammation, loss of function and progressive destruction of joints.² More than 23 million people worldwide suffer from RA, with 300,000 in Canada.³ RA affects women two to three times more often than men.¹

About Women in Biz Network

Women in Biz Network is Canada’s leading organization for empowering women through a variety of online and in-person mentorship programs for women in technology and business. Women in Biz Network provides online resources which connect professional and entrepreneurial women with mentors to increase opportunities as well as an array of online tools and information to help women succeed in business and life. Since 2010, Women in Biz Network has mentored over 2,600 women in Canada and is an online community of over 35,000. Women in Biz Network also provides marketing, events, and professional consulting services. For more information go to www.womeninbiznetwork.com and connect on social media at @womeninbiznetwork.

About Eli Lilly Canada Inc.

Eli Lilly and Company is a global healthcare leader that unites caring with discovery to make life better for people around the world. We were founded more than a century ago by Colonel Eli Lilly, who was committed to creating high quality medicines that meet people's needs, and today we remain true to that mission in all our work. Lilly employees work to discover and bring life-changing medicines to those who need them, improve the understanding and management of disease, and contribute to our communities through philanthropy and volunteerism.

Eli Lilly Canada was established in 1938, the result of a research collaboration with scientists at the University of Toronto which eventually produced the world's first commercially-available insulin. Our work focuses on oncology, diabetes, autoimmunity, neurodegeneration, and pain. To learn more about Lilly Canada, please visit us at www.lilly.ca.

For more information, please contact:

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References

¹ Rheumatoid Arthritis: What is Rheumatoid Arthritis? [https://www.arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-\(a-z\)/types/rheumatoid-arthritis](https://www.arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-(a-z)/types/rheumatoid-arthritis). Accessed September 2018.

² World Health Organization (WHO). The Global Burden of Disease Report, (table 7, page 32) 2004, http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/GBD_report_2004update_full.pdf. Accessed September 2018.