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**Global Osteoarthritis Leaders Host OA Innovation Shark Tank Meeting at U.S. Congress to Showcase Promise of New Cures – Call for Increased Federal Funding and Transparency**

*Rep. Connolly, Rep. Dingell, and Congressional Arthritis Caucus Cheer the New Science – Salute Innovation and Mark National Arthritis Awareness Month*

**May 11, 2023 – Washington, D.C.** – Marking National Arthritis Awareness Month in May, Angry@Arthritis and the Arthritis Foundation today hosted the first annual OA Innovation “Shark Tank” meeting on Capitol Hill to spotlight the promise of new treatments to cure osteoarthritis (OA). As researchers and industry demonstrate the success of OA treatments in clinical trials, the arthritis community is saluting innovation and asking Congress for increased OA funding to help cure this disease that afflicts one in seven American adults.

Clinical trials are very expensive. Today, it’s impossible to see the current level of federal research funding for OA treatments or to understand the impact of the investments Congress is currently making. The community is asking for the Government Accountability Office or the Congressional Research Service to audit current federal OA investment levels and impact, as well as generate an integrated annual report on federal OA research progress.

More than 32.5 million American adults suffer with OA, and more than five percent of the global population are afflicted with the disease. As our population ages, OA is a growing concern – 100 percent of people will suffer with OA if we live long enough. OA can afflict any and all joints in the body – and today, Americans receive 790,000 knee and 450,000 hip replacements per year, while far larger numbers live with the pain and avoid troublesome joint replacements. There is no effective treatment of OA in the hands and many other joints. Each year, OA costs the U.S. economy \$71 billion in lost productivity – and inflicts \$65.5 billion in medical expenses. While there are a number of treatments in the FDA approval process, currently there is no FDA approved OA treatment. The guidance to lose weight, exercise, and eat healthy is great – but this is a much bigger problem.

This first annual OA Innovation Shark Tank program brings together the leading minds in OA research and clinical disciplines from across America and around the world to present their treatments, opinions, research, and human clinical trial data. The treatments target OA in a series of different joints. The program puts a spotlight on the promise of cures – and makes the case for additional investment from government and the pharmaceutical industry. In addition to opening remarks from Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI), the program featured:

Dr. Elizabeth “Blair” Solow, M.D., Associate Professor of Rheumatology, Department of Internal Medicine at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center; and chair of the America College of Rheumatology Government Affairs Committee. Dr. Solow provided a rheumatologist’s clinician perspective and spoke to the disease modifying OA treatment desert in patient care. She underlined the urgent need for new innovation and increased federal research and development funding to improve patient care and outcomes.

Dr. Ivan Martin, Chair of the Department of Biomedicine at the University of Basel, Switzerland. Dr. Martin reviewed his team’s Nasal Tissue Engineered Cartilage (N-TEC) treatment that harvests cells from nasal cartilage and grows them into cartilage patches which are surgically inserted into cartilage defects and damaged OA joints. His team has treated more than 100 human patients’ knees, shoulders, and ankles with N-TEC.

Dr. Jennifer Elisseeff, Director of the Translational Tissue Engineering Center at Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Elisseeff is a pioneer in regenerative immunology – treatments that empower patients’ bodies to repair their joints themselves. She created the original recipe for the anti-aging, senolytic OA drug UBX0101 that recently exited FDA clinical trials. Dr. Elisseeff talked about the promise of regenerative immunology and senolytics.

Dr. Brad Estes, CEO and founder, CytexOrtho, in North Carolina. Dr. Estes reviewed his team’s work restoring damaged joints using a cutting-edge regenerative medical implant designed to mimic native tissues. CytexOrtho recently received Breakthrough Device Designation for its joint repair product and is currently in the process of entering human clinical trials in the hip later this year.

Dr. Yusuf Yazici, Chief Medical Officer at Biosplice Therapeutics Inc. based in San Diego, California. Dr. Yazici presented data on Lorecivivint, an injectable CLK/DYRK inhibitor thought to modulate Wnt and inflammatory pathways, in development as a potential pain and disease-modifying treatment for knee osteoarthritis. Lorecivivint is currently in phase 3 clinical trials

“Osteoarthritis is crippling Americans and our economy,” said Steve O’Keeffe, founder, Angry@Arthritis. “But it is not inevitable and it’s not incurable. To steal a line from Cytex Ortho, people don’t want to replace their joints – they want to renew them. We need to disrupt the inevitability of the failing status quo. We have many innovative new treatments that are proving effective in clinical trials – America needs to know. Our government and industry players need to jump into this fight and invest in osteoarthritis research and cures. We encourage you to contact your Congressional representative – 32.5 million Americans – that’s a powerful voting block.”

“Scientific advancements are moving at a lightning speed, and they can really make a difference in OA treatment – but we’re disappointed that the funding and support just don’t add up,” said Anna Hyde, Vice President of Advocacy and Access for the Arthritis Foundation. “As part of our commitment to leading the way to scientific breakthroughs, we’re pushing for lawmakers to increase the federal investment in arthritis research and help make real progress in helping millions of Americans live free from OA pain.”

### **About Angry@Arthritis**

Angry@Arthritis is a new 501(c)(3) focused on attacking and eliminating osteoarthritis – [www.angryarthritis.org](http://www.angryarthritis.org). Angry@Arthritis provides the patient’s guide to OA, raises money to fund new cures, and advocates for OA to the U.S. Congress.

### **About the Arthritis Foundation**

The Arthritis Foundation is fighting for all people who live with arthritis. As Champions of Yes, the Arthritis Foundation’s mission is to turn the obstacles arthritis causes into opportunities. The Arthritis Foundation champions life-changing solutions and medical advancements, and it also provides ways for people to connect, break down barriers in health care and join the fight to conquer arthritis — uniting hearts, minds and resources to change the future of arthritis. To join the fight to conquer arthritis, visit [arthritis.org](http://arthritis.org).