

Arthritis a painful burden according to new report

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Arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions cost Australia \$55.1 billion but only \$4 million is spent on clinical trials, a new report shows.

A new [report](#) into the scope of musculoskeletal (MSK) [clinical trials](#) in Australia has revealed that, relative to the burden of arthritis and other MSK conditions on the Australian community, national funding for research is disproportionately low.

The report, led by Professor Rachelle Buchbinder, from Monash University's Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine and the Cabrini Institute shows that despite [arthritis](#) and MSK conditions affecting 6.1 million people (26.9 per cent of the Australian population), research is severely underfunded.

Funded by Arthritis and Osteoporosis Victoria (A&OV), The scope, funding and publication of musculoskeletal clinical trials performed in Australia (2009 - 2013) report published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, found that despite the rising cost of MSK conditions in Australia - \$55.1 billion in 2012 – only \$4 million was spent on clinical trials in the same year.

The findings suggest an urgent need for greater investment to provide relief to the 6.1 million Australians who live in pain from MSK conditions.

Professor Buchbinder noted that the \$55.1 billion cost to the Australian

community is only projected to rise as the population ages.

"Timely research that addresses important questions relevant to consumers, clinicians and policymakers and reduces the sizeable delays in translating evidence into practice is critical for reducing the burden associated with these conditions," Professor Buchbinder said.

In the last five years, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has awarded 29 project grants (and over \$17.6 million) in support of Australian MSK trials. While this may seem like a lot, it actually works out to be .8 per cent of the total NHMRC grants (29 out of 3,631 or \$17.6 million out of \$354 million).

A&OV CEO, Linda Martin said the findings of this report were a cause for great concern for the millions of Australians living with MSK conditions.

"Not only is this a massive health problem, this is an ever-increasing medical bill that Australia's economy can no longer afford to pay. We need to work harder and work together to find solutions," Ms Martin said.

A recent report by Arthritis and Osteoporosis Victoria found that 58 per cent of Australians currently living with MSK [conditions](#) are between 25 and 64 years – the prime working age.

More information: "The scope, funding and publication of musculoskeletal clinical trials performed in Australia." Allison M Bourne, Samuel L Whittle, Bethan L Richards, Chris G Maher and Rachelle Buchbinder. *Med J Aust* 2014; 200 (2): 88-91. [DOI: 10.5694/mja13.10907](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja13.10907)

Provided by Monash University

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