

## Providing

reliable and up to date information to improve the understanding of arthritis and osteoporosis

## Promoting

healthy lifestyles and self-management to optimise health outcomes.

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# joinNTed

**Arthritis & Osteoporosis NT**

**December 2021**

## Annual General Meeting

This was held in our office on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November.

Current Board positions are:

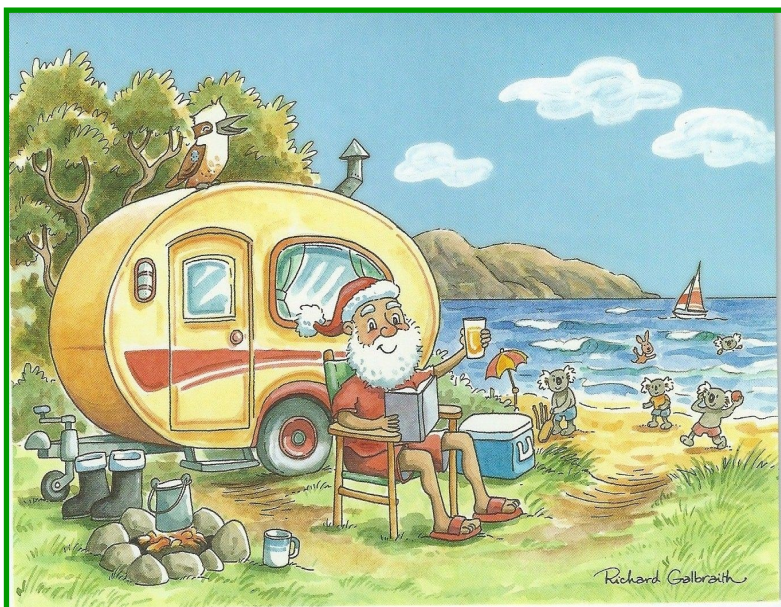
Vice President: Margaret Murray

Secretary: Hilary Fowler

Treasurer: Ruth Garden

Non-executive board members: Anne Coutts, Amin Islam, Ruth Quinn, Lyn Skipper and Renae Callaway

A special welcome to new faces Lyn and Renae. The position of President remains vacant, and there are further vacancies available for non-executive positions. Enquiries and expressions of interest are encouraged any time of the year. Please don't hesitate to contact the office with your suggestions. Turn to Page 7 to meet the newest members of your Board.



## Season's Greetings to all our members and supporters

**Office closed:** The office will close at 2:00pm Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December, to re open on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> January at 9:30am.

During this time there will be checking of our post office box, emails and phone messages - 8948 5232:

***Membership renewals always welcome!***

The following information is an extract only from the latest consumer information sheet developed by the Australian Rheumatology Association (ARA).

**Information for people with Rheumatoid Arthritis, Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) and other autoimmune inflammatory rheumatic diseases (AIRD) in the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic.**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021**

The information sheet provides an update on general information published by ARA on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 ([summarised in our August newsletter](#)). For specific questions please contact your rheumatologist.

At the beginning of the pandemic there was concern from patients and rheumatologists related to potential risks of being infected and adverse outcomes for rheumatology patients. Despite the Australian Department of health identifying people with AIRD as vulnerable, the current international and local data have been reassuring.

**What do we know about patients with AIRD who have contracted COVID-19?**

- ◆ Current data suggests that most people with AIRD recover from COVID-19
- ◆ **The priority should be to maintain adequate disease control while minimising glucocorticoids/steroids. Glucocorticoids/steroids** have been associated with a higher risk of hospitalisation.

**Should I have the vaccine?**

- ◆ Yes, all patients with AIRD should have the COVID-19 vaccine
- ◆ Some patients with AIRD are recommended to have a 3<sup>rd</sup> primary vaccine dose.

**The ARA have produced an information sheet on the COVID-19 vaccine specifically for patients.**

**Both information sheets are available at Arthritis & Osteoporosis NT,  
Freecall: 1800 011 041 or (08) 8948 5234**

**OR check the ARA website:**

**<http://https://rheumatology.org.au/For-Patients/COVID-Information>**



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**"If you're reading this...  
Congratulations, you're alive.  
If that's not something to smile about,  
then I don't know what is."**

**Chad Sugg  
Monsters Under Your Head**

## Changes to medicine information sharing

Changes to laws around collecting and sharing information on some medicines were passed through NT Parliament on Wednesday 1st December and are due to come into effect by January 2022.

The new system, *NTScript*, is an update to the existing way the NT Government collects information on the supply of some medicines which have a risk of overuse and can lead to accidental overdoses and hospitalisations. *Articles were published in the April and June newsletters foreshadowing these changes.*

Under this new system your prescribers and pharmacists will be required to provide records of the prescriptions you receive for medicines for pain, anxiety and to assist with sleep. Health professionals managing your conditions will then be able to view this record and identify risks and encourage discussions on how your medicines are helping or how to protect you from unintended harms.

*NTScript* will be available to all doctors and pharmacists from March 2022 and your health professionals will be required to check the database before they prescribe or supply you some medicines. Checking the system is fast and easy so won't make it take longer to get your medicines and makes it easier if you are seeing a new GP or pharmacy as they will know your history of using these medicines.

*NTScript* does not tell a doctor or pharmacist if they should or should not give you a medicine, this remains a decision between you and your health provider. Education is being provided to doctors and pharmacists on how to use the system and the importance of not making sudden changes to peoples' medicines.

Another change expected to make accessing your medicines easier is that the NT will now accept prescriptions written by interstate doctors for most medicines. Previously, pharmacists could only supply strong painkillers from prescriptions written by NT doctors which made it harder for people travelling to the NT or who are under the care of an interstate specialist. This requirement has been changed to allow interstate prescriptions. This means that if you are under the care of an interstate specialist, they can write prescriptions themselves rather than needing you to see an NT GP.

If people would like more information on the upcoming changes, they can visit the

*NTScript* website at [www.tiny.cc/ntscript](http://www.tiny.cc/ntscript) or contact Medicines and Poisons at [poisonscontrol@nt.gov.au](mailto:poisonscontrol@nt.gov.au) or 0889227341

### List of medicines included in NTScript

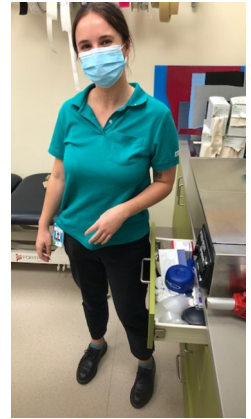
- ♦ Strong Painkillers such as Morphine (MS Contin®), and Oxycodone(Targin®, OxyContin®)-
- ♦ Benzodiazepines (Valium®, Temaze®, Paxam®)
- ♦ Schedule 4 pain medicines Pregabalin (Lyrica®), Gabapentin, Tramadol and Codeine containing medicines (Panadeine Forte®)
- ♦ Medicines used for sleep - Zolpidem (Stilnox®) Zopiclone (Imovane®)

*Article by Sam Keitaanpaa, NTScript Project Officer, Department of Health*

# Top tips for managing arthritis

## Change the way you do activities:

1. Make an activity log to understand what exacerbates your arthritis
2. Use bigger muscles to do activities to reduce joint pain. For example, when closing a drawer/cupboard use your thigh or forearm instead of putting pressure through smaller joints in the hand - *see picture at right*
3. Store things between your shoulder and hip height to avoid bending
4. Plan, pace and prioritise the activities you do during the day to reduce over use of joints



Author Amy Elson

## Use equipment to make tasks easier/ off load tasks, for example:

- ◇ Long handled garden tools
- ◇ Jar openers, Tap turners
- ◇ Built up cutlery, Right angled knife
- ◇ Spike board for chopping veggies
- ◇ Robot Vacuum cleaner



## Modify equipment or home:

- ◇ Change door handles to levers instead of knobs
- ◇ Raise garden beds

## Get help:

1. Have a home assessment with an Occupational Therapist, they can look at how you can modify your home, introduce aids or equipment to ensure you keep doing the things you want to do with less pain
2. Cleaning Services –instead of doing repetitive cleaning tasks like sweeping and vacuuming
3. Gardening assistance
4. Meals on wheels

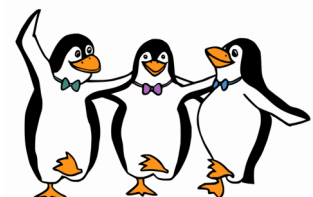
If you are 65 years or older (50 years or older for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people) **My Aged Care** is the national portal to get help at home.

Visit <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/> or call 1800 200 422 for more information on how to get the help you need.

*If you have difficulties accessing **My Aged Care** call COTA for assistance from the Aged Care Navigator team: 8941 1004: Monday to Friday 9:00am to 2:30pm.*

## Exercise is an important part of managing pain:

- ◇ Gentle daily exercises prevent joints getting stiff
- ◇ Improves mobility and flexibility of joints
- ◇ Maintains muscle strength and reduces fatigue.



*Article continued on next page*



## Tips for managing arthritis *(Continued)*

For upper limb specific exercises talk to a hand therapist

For a Hand Therapy appointment you can call Darwin Private Hospital on 8920 6013 to book an appointment with an Occupational Therapist.

For arthritis in other joints talk to a physiotherapist or an exercise physiologist.



Article provided by  
**Amy Elson Occupational Therapist,**  
Senior Occupational Therapist at Darwin Private  
Hospital with special interest in treating lymphoedema  
and hand conditions.

## Palmerston Support Group

This group celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday in October this year - a wonderful example of enduring friendships. They are now in recess for Christmas and the New Year, reconvening in February. As well as welcoming new faces to the group, planning is well under way for the 2022 guest speakers.

Good company in a relaxed setting over a cup of tea or coffee, and sharing common interests, experiences and ideas, means feeling better when you leave than when you arrived!

### The group meets monthly:

- at the Brennan Electorate Office, Palmerston Shopping Centre (opposite Target)
- on the third Monday of each month at 10:00 am



## Thank you to Merit Partners!

Treasurer Ruth Garden is delighted to receive a cheque from Rosemary Campbell on behalf of Merit Partners, contributed to by staff, in place of buying “Kris Kringle” gifts for each other. The occasion was a fundraiser morning tea, with AONT as the beneficiary.

L to R: MunLi (Merit), Natalie (AONT bookkeeper), Ruth Q (AONT Board), Ruth G (Treasurer), Rosemary (Merit), Amin (AONT Board), Steven Lai (Merit)



## Cold turkey salad with mango and honey dressing (gluten free)

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons seasoned rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon castor sugar
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 small red chilli, seeds removed, finely chopped
- 500g leftover turkey (preferably breast meat), sliced
- 100g baby spinach leaves
- 2 cups mixed Asian herbs (such as coriander, mint, Thai basil)
- 1 large ripe mango, peeled & sliced
- Black sesame seeds, to sprinkle

### DRESSING

- 5 tablespoons (100ml) honey
- 1/4 cup (60ml) rice vinegar
- 100ml peanut oil
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil



### METHOD

1. Mix together the rice vinegar, sugar, garlic and chilli, and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Pour over the sliced turkey and set aside.
2. To make the dressing, place the honey and vinegar in a food processor and process to combine. With the motor running, slowly add the peanut and sesame oils until a thickish dressing forms.
3. Place a pile of spinach on each plate and top with a handful of herbs, followed by some turkey. Lay slices of mango on top, drizzle with the dressing and sprinkle with the black sesame seeds.

## Out and about in Darwin:

### Men's Health Pitstop

Various organisations provided information stands at this Cancer Council event at Tennis NT, Marrara, promoted in our October newsletter. An opportunity to chat to clients, network with other providers, and to showcase and share our materials.



Ruth Garden setting up to greet visitors.



## Meet our newest Board members

**Renae Callaway:** Having received a diagnosis of early onset osteoarthritis in her spine and neck at the start of the year, Renae joined AONT, attending the Palmerston Support Group. Currently an active participant in her daughter's school community for the past two years, and a member of their Community Engagement Group, Renae is also a regular at the School Board meetings.

**Lyn Skipper:** Lyn is a long term local, having first come to Darwin 1969. From 1975 she lived in Jabiru, Malak and Batchelor, and the last 27 years in Humpty Doo. Lyn has a long history of community involvement with Humpty Doo events and both the Freds Pass and Darwin Shows. In the early 2000's Lyn also helped out with AONT's warm water exercise program in Palmerston.

**Ruth Quinn:** Ruth joined AONT earlier this year after attending AONT's pain management course to deal with Osteoarthritis (knees and hip) and Rheumatoid Arthritis (hands). Hearing there was a vacancy on the Board and having had previous experience on not-for-profit boards, most recently with Healthy Living NT, she expressed interest in joining the Board. She was initially appointed at the September Board meeting and re-elected at the recent AGM. Ruth is a retired librarian and has lived in Darwin for 35 years.

## Support Group for Scleroderma QLD and NT

This is a closed Facebook group originally established by four friends on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland to reach a wider community of scleroderma sufferers to offer support, friendship, knowledge and share information and experiences. It is a closed group meaning all Members need to answer relevant questions and be accepted into the group. This is to ensure privacy among the group - for members to feel comfortable sharing what can be very personal and uncomfortable information. From humble beginnings with approximately 20 members their reach now includes all of Qld and encompassing NT. As the NT doesn't have a dedicated Scleroderma association, NT comes under the umbrella of the Scleroderma Association of Qld Inc. The support group now has 322 members and new-comers are always welcome. This is a very casual and supportive group with lots of hints and tips shared daily.

The group is very respectful of members' differences and is not used to sell any products, marketing, treatments, or offer any cure. Occasionally there may be an item for sale if funds from the sale go to Scleroderma Qld, but there is no promoting of any company or product.

We would love to see more NT members and invite you to join.

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/1723620744634232/?multi\\_permaLinks=2994312147565079&notif\\_id=1637541152934633&notif\\_t=feedback\\_reaction\\_generic&ref=notif](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1723620744634232/?multi_permaLinks=2994312147565079&notif_id=1637541152934633&notif_t=feedback_reaction_generic&ref=notif)

*Article by Cheyenne MacLeod, 0417 615 733*

*President Scleroderma Association of Queensland Inc.*

If readers are interested in advocating for further scleroderma research, please contact either Cheyenne directly, or the AONT office, for suggestions on letter content and who to send it to.



**The Arthritis  
Foundation of the  
Northern Territory Inc.**  
Trading as  
**Arthritis &  
Osteoporosis NT**  
ABN 67 099 326 608

**Patron:**

Her Honour the Honourable  
Vicki O'Halloran AM  
Administrator of the NT

**Find us at:**

Shop 18 Rapid Creek  
Business Village,  
48 Trower Rd Millner

[www.aont.org.au](http://www.aont.org.au)

[facebook.com/  
arthritis.osteoporosis.nt](https://facebook.com/arthritis.osteoporosis.nt)

**Contact us:**

Free call: 1800 011 041  
(08) 8948 5232  
PO Box 452,  
Nightcliff 0814  
[info@aont.org.au](mailto:info@aont.org.au)

**We are open:**

9:30am – 2pm  
Monday to Thursday  
(excluding Public Holidays)

**Staff**

**Administrative Assistant**

Deirdre Moldenhauer

**Accounts**

Natalie Valastro

**Board**

**President**

Vacant

**Vice President**

Margaret Murray

**Secretary**

Hilary Fowler

**Treasurer and Public  
Officer**

Ruth Garden

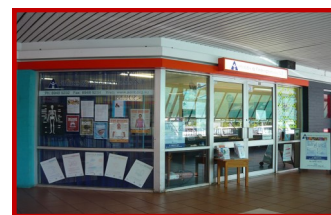
**Ordinary Board Members**

Anne Coutts  
Amin Islam  
Ruth Quinn  
Lyn Skipper  
Renae Callaway

## What We Do

### Our work includes:

- Responding to walk-in, email and telephone enquiries
- Providing personalised information packs in response to enquiries
- Producing six newsletters each year
- Hosting pain self-management courses for anyone experiencing chronic pain - call the office on Freecall 1800 011 041 or 8948 5232 for more details of the next available course
- Providing information stands at a range of forums throughout the year
- Keeping in touch with other community health organisations and the services they provide
- Delivering bulk materials on request to a range of health services
- Presentations to community groups by invitation
- Making applications for various small grants to assist with special projects
- Liaising with Arthritis Australia and other state and territory arthritis organisations
- Liaising with Healthy Bones Australia.



## Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



[facebook.com/arthritis.osteoporosis.nt](https://facebook.com/arthritis.osteoporosis.nt)



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