



## A SoCal E-Newsletter March 2012

### March Is National Autoimmune Diseases Awareness Month

Released: 3/2/2012 11:30 AM EST

Source: American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (AARDA)

Newswise — Eastpointe, MI, March 2, 2012:

March is National Autoimmune Diseases Awareness Month, and the American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (AARDA) is working to educate the public on risk factors, prevalence, and the severe lack of awareness surrounding autoimmune diseases.

During March, AARDA hopes to educate the public on the top five things everyone should know about autoimmune disease:

- (1) **50 Million Americans have an autoimmune disease, comprising a major U.S. health crisis.**
- (2) **There are 100+ autoimmune diseases including Crohn's disease, celiac disease, rheumatoid arthritis (RA), vasculitis, and Addison's disease.**
- (3) **Autoimmune diseases "cluster" in families; for example, if your grandmother had lupus, you could be at greater risk for developing an autoimmune disease.**
- (4) **Fewer than 13 percent of Americans can name an autoimmune disease.**
- (5) **Autoimmune diseases target women 75 percent more often than men; and combined, autoimmune diseases are one of the top ten killers of women under the age of 65.**

Increased levels of awareness amongst the general public are more important now than ever before according to AARDA's President and Executive Director Virginia T. Ladd. She says, "Autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis (MS), type 1 diabetes, and celiac disease have all been shown to be on the rise, but answers as to why these increases are occurring are yet unknown. However, it is imperative that the public be more aware of their own risk factors for developing autoimmune diseases so that, as symptoms occur, they can seek a diagnosis and begin a treatment regimen. Early diagnosis and onset of treatment can make a significant difference in someone's chances of becoming disabled or suffering organ damage."

AARDA will sponsor several events this March in honor of National Autoimmune Diseases Awareness Month, including a free public forum, "What Every American Needs to Know About Autoimmune Disease," which will be held in partnership with the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, in Denver, CO, March 3. Additionally, to increase awareness in Congress and advocate for autoimmune diseases becoming a national health priority, AARDA will host a Congressional Briefing in collaboration with the National Coalition of Autoimmune Patient Groups, on March 28. March will also bring the launch of AARDA's Autoimmune Walk Campaign led by Actress Kellie Martin who serves as the campaign's Ambassador. The campaign will lead the way to AARDA's inaugural awareness and fundraising walk which will take place in Chicago, IL on June 2. For more information on events and activities surrounding National Autoimmune Diseases Awareness Month and/or autoimmune diseases, please visit AARDA's Web Site [www.aarda.org](http://www.aarda.org) or call (586) 776-3900.

#### **About the American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (AARDA)**

AARDA is the only national nonprofit health agency dedicated to bringing a national focus to autoimmunity, the major cause of serious chronic diseases. Approximately 50 million Americans, 20 percent of the population or one in five people, suffer from autoimmune diseases. Women are more likely than men to be affected; some estimates say that 75 percent of those affected are women. Still, with these statistics, autoimmunity is rarely discussed as a women's health issue.

The American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association is dedicated to the eradication of autoimmune diseases and the alleviation of suffering and the socioeconomic impact of autoimmunity through fostering and facilitating collaboration in the areas of education, public awareness, research, and patient services in an effective, ethical and efficient manner.