



**NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

Physicians discuss serious shortage of Rheumatologists

For immediate release – April 29, 2010

St. John's, NL – Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association President Dr. Brendan Lewis today launched the NLMA's fifth public information session, this time to discuss the challenges facing Rheumatology patients in the province.

Panelists for the information session were three of the province's four Rheumatologists, including Dr. Sean Hamilton, Dr. Majed Khraishi and Dr. Proton Rahman.

"Currently, we have four Adult Rheumatologists in Newfoundland and Labrador, three with Eastern Health and one in private practice. All the Adult Rheumatologists are in St. John's; however, because of our teaching commitments with Memorial University, as well as research responsibilities, we have the equivalent of about 2.5 Rheumatologists... We need at least 10 Adult Rheumatologists in the province," explained Dr. Hamilton.

Dr. Lewis noted there are more than 89,000 patients in Newfoundland and Labrador who have been diagnosed with arthritis. He said that the system is functioning well beyond capacity and at a rate that is not sustainable. Dr. Lewis further explained that patients are particularly at risk if they live outside St. John's, where there are no rheumatologists and where arthritis is most prevalent.

"Arthritis is a painful and debilitating disease that has a significant impact on a person's quality of life... This kind of suffering should not be dismissed; these people must not be ignored or forgotten. The province's inability to recruit new rheumatologists coupled with an aging population and a growing number of complex arthritis patients represent all the elements of a perfect storm. The time to take action is now," said Dr. Lewis

"Four Rheumatologists serving the needs of the entire population is just not enough. We need more doctors. By having better managed pain and improved access to rheumatology services, we can expect less wait times, less hospitalizations and reduced costs to the system over the long term. More importantly, it will mean improved quality of life for our patients," Dr. Lewis added.

- 30 -

Media Contact:
Lynn Barter, ABC
Director, Communications and Public Affairs
Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association
Tel: (709) 726-7424, ext. 306
Cell: (709) 727-6153
Email: lbarter@nlma.nl.ca

NEWS RELEASE