



Health Awareness

Kathleen Turner Speaks Out About Rheumatoid Arthritis

(NAPSA)—It's not often thought that arthritis can affect anyone, including young people in the prime of their lives who may be starting families and building careers, graduating from college or even acting in Hollywood. On the contrary, it can, and it did happen to well-known actress Kathleen Turner who was diagnosed with a distinct form of arthritis known as rheumatoid arthritis, or RA.

RA is not a result of over activity or "wear and tear" of the joints that is often associated with the more familiar arthritis, called osteoarthritis. Though RA does affect the joints, it also causes additional signs and symptoms that can often go unrecognized as RA.

Turner, stage and screen actress, had many of the early warning signs of RA, including fatigue, morning stiffness, joint pain and inflammation.

"It was terribly frightening. I didn't know what was happening to me. I didn't know why there was so much pain, and I felt so ill," said Turner.

After countless trips to doctors, Turner was finally diagnosed with RA, a disease that affects about two million Americans, the majority of whom are women. It is a chronic, progressive and debilitating condition in which the immune system attacks the body's joint tissue, breaking down healthy joints into dysfunctional and often deformed ones. Despite the devastating effects of RA, if diagnosed early, there may be opportunities to inhibit the progression of joint damage.

When Turner was diagnosed she was faced with the possibility of giving up her dreams, including acting.



When Kathleen Turner was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis ten years ago, she was afraid she might have to give up acting.

"If I can't move, I can't act," said Turner. "And acting to me is what I was born to do. I love my job tremendously, and the thought that I might lose it was terrifying."

Turner became determined to learn as much as possible about RA and quickly found that information was not easily available. Because of her difficult and painful experience, Turner is now taking on a new role: educating others about RA and the importance of early diagnosis and treatment through a new program called RA Access.

"I'm doing this because I want people to know that they can get information. They can fight to keep their lives and lifestyle, and I want them to know there is help," said Turner.

RA Access is a free patient education program specifically designed for people with RA. The

program is dedicated to helping people learn more about the disease, its signs and symptoms, and the importance of RA education and seeking early treatment.

"I want to encourage others to seek treatment early in order to lessen the joint damage that can result from this disease," said Turner.

By calling 1-888-373-3700 or logging on to www.ra-access.com, you can receive:

- Inspiring educational videos
- Guides to treatment and RA information resources
- Mailings that focus on the issues that affect the daily lives of people with RA
- Newsletters and e-mail updates

If you have RA or would like more information for family members or friends, visit www.ra-access.com or call 1-888-373-3700.