

# Health, Beauty & Fitness

September is Arthritis Month

## Physiotherapy can help patients cope with arthritis pain

If you are experiencing pain, joint stiffness and decreased mobility due to arthritis, the Canadian Physiotherapy Association recommends that you consult a physiotherapist.

Physiotherapy has an excellent long-standing history of effectively treating the symptoms of arthritis.

The benefits of therapeutic exercises for rheumatoid arthritis were described by an expert panel of multidisciplinary health care researchers who reviewed the existing evidence. (*Therapeutic Exercise Guidelines for Adults with Rheumatoid Arthritis, Ottawa Panel Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Group, October 2004*)

Panel member Dr. Lucie Brosseau, a physiotherapist and a leading researcher in evidence-based practice, says there is strong evidence that "therapeutic exercise is an effective means to achieve pain relief, improve strength, reduce swollen joints and improve function."

She added that this means less sick leave and a better quality of life.

A Canadian study of patients with rheumatoid arthritis showed that those who followed a home-based physiotherapy program improved with the treatment and were able to maintain the results one year later. Other research findings have shown that low-intensity exercise over a 24-week period can provide pain relief and improvement in functional status.

Therapeutic exercise plays an important role in managing the symptoms of other forms of arthritis as well, such as osteoarthritis. Studies have shown that

therapeutic exercise, whether prescribed for specific joint problems or a general exercise program, results in reduced pain, improvement in physical activity, aerobic capacity and energy levels.

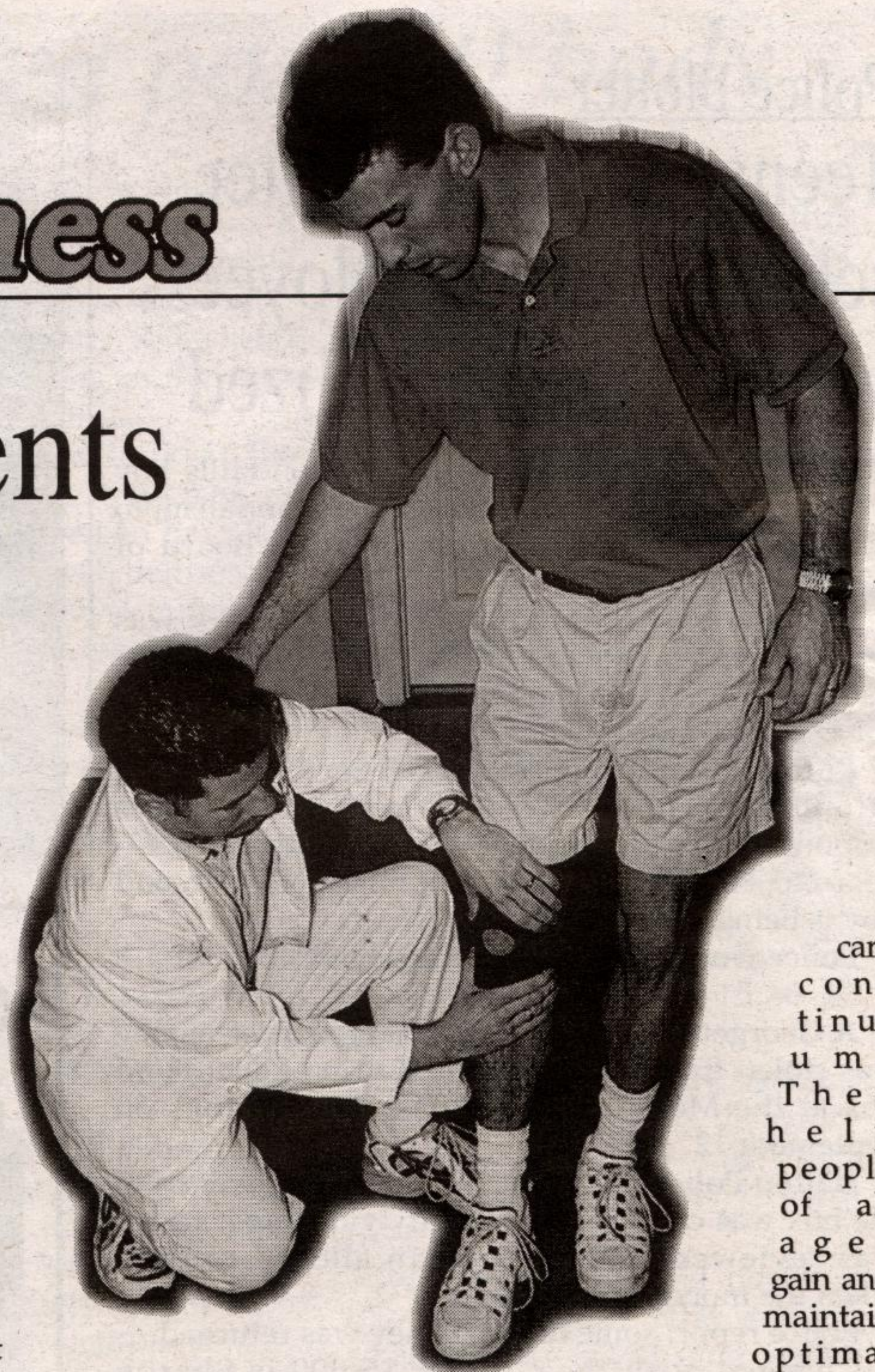
Carrying excess weight puts individuals at risk of developing osteoarthritis (OA), particularly in the weight-bearing hip and knee joints.

A recent report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) demonstrates a correlation between being obese and the incidence of knee and hip replacement surgeries.

"A populations-based, public health strategy to restore healthy physical activity and eating will mitigate the impact of arthritis and ultimately may delay or reduce the need for total joint replacement", said Laurie Hurley, a physiotherapist and senior director, Arthritis Programs at The Arthritis Society's Ontario Division.

Physiotherapy begins with a medical history and physical assessment that includes an analysis of function and gait. The treatment is then tailored to the individual's symptoms, needs and lifestyle. Using exercise, education and a variety of therapeutic modalities as needed, physiotherapists work with their clients to help them become stronger and more active.

Physiotherapists are primary care, client-centred professionals who can make a contribution across the health

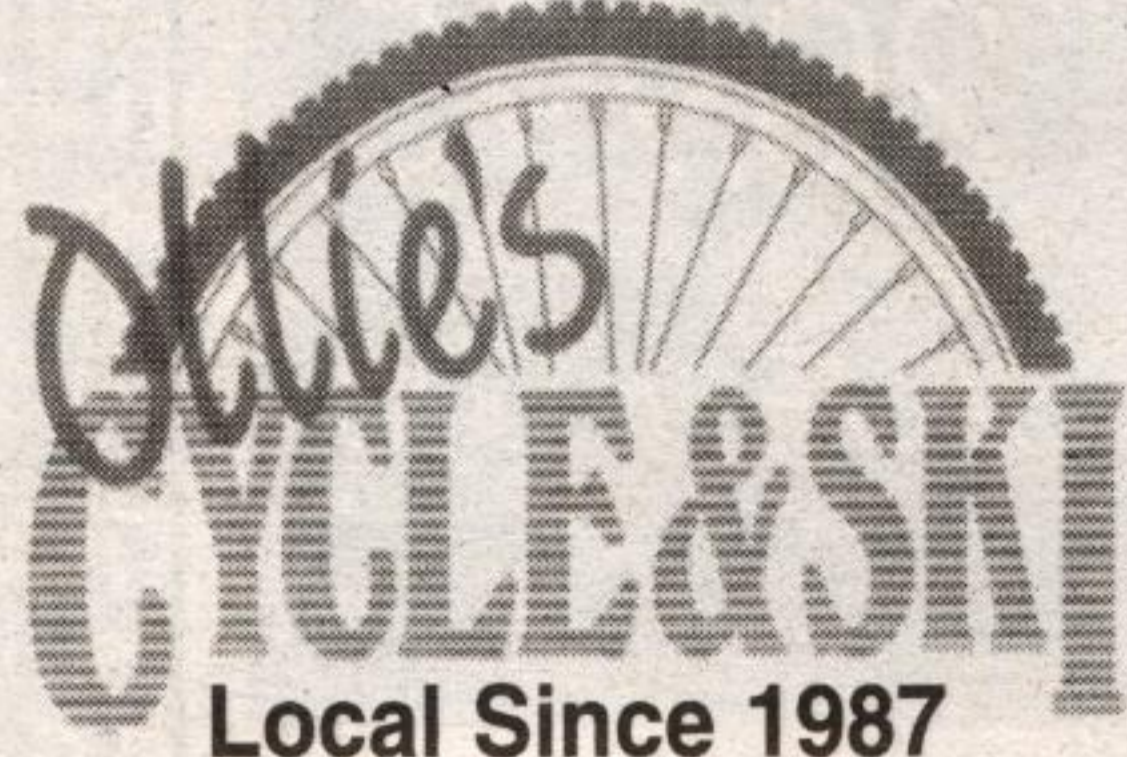


care continuum. They help people of all ages gain and maintain optimal physical

function and an active lifestyle. With their applied knowledge and understanding of the human body in action, physiotherapists are able to help their patients increase mobility, have less pain, build strength and improve balance and cardiovascular function.

Physiotherapists not only treat injuries, they also provide education on how to prevent the onset of pain and/or injury that can limit activity.

For more information, visit the Canadian Physiotherapy Association's website [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca), or the Arthritis Society's website at [www.arthritis.ca](http://www.arthritis.ca).



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