



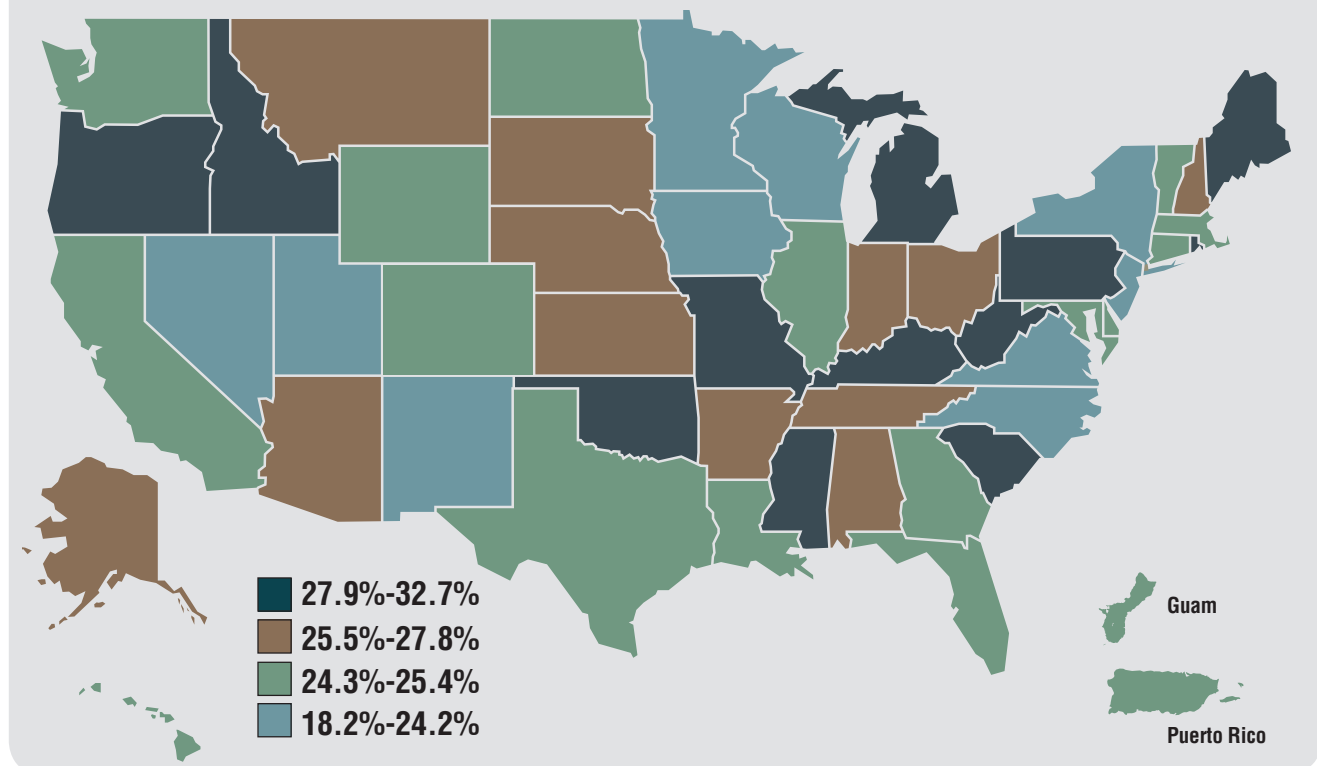
Rheumatology

Arthritis and other rheumatic conditions are the most common cause of disability among older adults in the U.S. and have a considerable impact on health, quality of life, and health care costs. According to the CDC, the total direct and indirect cost of arthritis and other rheumatic conditions in the U.S. during 1997 was \$86.2 billion, or 1% of the U.S. gross domestic product.¹ As a result of the rapidly growing number of older adults, the prevalence of arthritis is expected to increase substantially over the next 2 decades.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a systemic autoimmune disease that manifests primarily in the joints, lead-


ing to substantial morbidity, reduced survival, and enormous health care costs. It is one of the most common chronic conditions among veterans and is more prevalent in this group than it is in non-veterans. Similarly, the incidence of osteoarthritis among veterans is considerably higher than the incidence is in the general population. The VA health care system is faced with treating a large number of veterans with arthritis, whose joint symptoms and limitations are more severe than are those of the general population. Furthermore, the burden of treating these veterans will increase as the number of older veterans grows during the next decade.

Prevalence of Arthritis Among Veterans, 2011 to 2013²




Veterans & Arthritis³

5.5
MILLION VETERANS
have diagnosed arthritis



OF **450 troupes**
in 1 study
29% had
traumatic arthritis
and were ruled unfit
for duty



81%
of cases were
attributed to
explosions



Knee Replacement Disability Rating³



100% < 1 year following knee replacement

60% > 1 year following knee replacement if there is weakness and severe pain with motion

< 30% for all knee replacements

Joint Pain⁴

43.6%



Veterans were more likely than nonveterans to have joint pain, but there was no difference in the prevalence of severe pain

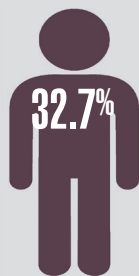
31.5%



Veteran vs Nonveteran Rates of Arthritis²



18-44 years



45-64 years



≥ 65 years