

Patient, Donor, Volunteer

Joan Tobin

"I'm not a typical psoriatic arthritis patient" says Joan Tobin. Instead of inflamed finger joints, wrists, knees or ankles (the sites most often affected) Joan's arthritic pain has concentrated in her upper back and produces considerable fatigue. Her immune system is also hyperactive, resulting in several food and environmental allergies.

Coupled with the psoriasis Joan inherited at 24 from her father and grandfather, a psoriatic arthritis diagnosis was made ten years later when she began experiencing stiffness, lack of strength and control in the fingers of her right hand. Later, the pain relocated to her back. A fulfilling career as a computer consultant converting small business manual record systems to computerized systems eventually came to an end. Joan and her husband Brian moved to a country property near Cobourg, Ontario and Joan started a business based from her home which she manages at her own pace.

"NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) kept me going in the early nineties and with the wonderful support of Dr. Dafna Gladman I have been drug-free for five years now." says Joan. A rheumatologist at University Health Network, Dr. Gladman developed a serious interest in psoriatic arthritis several years ago. She established a long-term psoriatic arthritis prognosis study some 22 years ago, and has been adding critical patient information to her patient database (probably the largest in the world) ever since. Armed with an ever-increasing cache of clinical and biological profile information, Dr. Gladman is recognized as Canada's leading expert in psoriatic arthritis.

What else keeps Joan going? "Long walks, gardening, and kayaking - wherever there's water, I'm on it!" Joan also volunteers her time to the Arthritis Society, conducting an Arthritis Self-Help Management Program at the health unit in Port



Joan Tobin & Dr. Dafna Gladman meet to discuss Joan's progress

Hope. The course helps arthritis patients cope with fatigue and pain, learn the value of good exercise, nutrition, and techniques available to manage stress and bouts of depression, as well as medications and working together with one's health care team. Because of the chronic nature of arthritis and immune system disorders, helping patients understand and manage their illnesses is vitally important - for themselves, for their families and for their caregivers.

For many years, the Tobins have generously supported arthritis research. Last year and this, they have provided funding for a summer student under the direction of Dr. Gladman, assisted by a matching donation from Brian's employer, IBM. As Joan says "Dr. Gladman has always been there for me when I needed her. I'm so delighted we can provide some financial support for her work, and perhaps this year's summer student will want to emulate her and become a rheumatologist and scientist too!"