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Arthritis is Australia's major cause of disability and chronic pain. In Australian women, osteoarthritis is the third leading cause of years lost due to disability. Osteoporosis affects nearly two million Australians. The Federal government acknowledged the importance of musculoskeletal diseases by designating arthritis and musculoskeletal diseases as the seventh National Health Priority. This decade has been designated by the United Nations and the World Health Organization as the Decade of Bone and Joint Disease. To try to raise awareness, the National Action Network (the committee charged with organising activities in Australia) arranged a summit in 2002 to focus on preventive issues for osteoporosis and arthritis, and the benefits of surgical approaches.

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