

Directions: Please use this template to submit a letter to the show The Dr's. Simply put your cursor over all the verbiage, right click to "copy". Then go back to the web page and click on the link to Email the Dr's. It will bring you right to the show's email page. In the comments box, right click and select "paste". Edit the template to add your story and opinions. Then you can scroll up to the rest of the form to fill out your personal information.

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On Monday, September 26th, the International Autoimmune Arthritis Movement (IAAM) launched a rally in the world of Autoimmune Arthritis to send letters to Dr. Phil requesting a retraction regarding a statement about Rheumatoid Arthritis and Childhood Obesity that he made on his show "Overweight or Underfed." His statements during this episode greatly angered those affected with Rheumatoid Arthritis, resulting in a submission to IAAM's Media Awareness Hotline, designed to combat misinformation stated in the media regarding Autoimmune Arthritis diseases. The IAAM took action by spurring a global rally that it is believed to have produced over 500 emails directed at the Dr. Phil show to either request a retraction, to present the studies that show childhood obesity leads to RA (as suggested on the show), or to clarify the difference regarding how over eating affects different types of arthritis. As of today, the Dr. Phil Show has neither acknowledged nor responded to these pleas.

During our research regarding why Dr. Phil would think childhood obesity is in any way linked to the onset of Rheumatoid Arthritis another similar quote was discovered, this time airing on the show The Dr's (January 6th, 2011, episode "The 17 Day Diet Challenge"). During this episode, Dr. Phil states:

"Changing your lifestyle and becoming healthier can prolong your life and help your children." Seventy percent of children who are obese become obese adults," Dr. Phil says. "And we're seeing adult diseases show up in children; adult diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, essential hypertension. These things are showing up in children — and we didn't see [this] a few generations ago — because of this obesity."

While this rally will continue to reach out to the Dr. Phil show, there is now a Call to Action to write the Dr's as well. For this reason, I write to you today.

(ENTER, IF YOU'D LIKE, YOUR STORY/WHY RA IS NOT CAUSED BY OBESITY. IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO DO THIS PORTION, PLEASE ERASE THIS LINE FROM YOUR TEMPLATE.)

Rheumatoid Arthritis has no specific known cause. It is thought to be triggered by genetic or environmental issues. The IAAM called on their Rheumatology Board, a group of practicing Rheumatologists who assist with any medical information needed to implement the programs and initiatives through the IAAM organization, to investigate any such research or medical findings to warrant Dr. Phil's comments. The report concluded that within the most reputable medical journals and encyclopedias, that while there is some evidence of hormonal relationships or smoking in women 18-70, there was no substantial evidence found to conclude that childhood obesity leads to Rheumatoid Arthritis.

Dr. Phil and the “Dr’s” may be confusing Rheumatoid Arthritis with Osteoarthritis, which unlike Rheumatoid Arthritis, is a degenerative condition occurring from wear and tear, age, injury or trauma. Excessive weight can result in damage to these localized, weight bearing joints resulting in Osteoarthritis. Rheumatoid Arthritis is an autoimmune disease that is systemic (whole body) and affects not only joints but in addition soft and connective tissues and, in some cases, organs.

We ask that the show the Dr’s take our pleas seriously regarding this matter. Broadcasting misinformation such as this is harmful to the livelihood of those living with Rheumatoid Arthritis and similar diseases. For decades we have been fighting the stereotype that what we have is “arthritis”, or Osteoarthritis- and now statements such as what aired on both the Dr’s and the Dr. Phil show will only add to this gross misunderstanding.

The International Autoimmune Arthritis Movement, a nonprofit located in Los Angeles that focuses only on the Autoimmune Arthritis diseases, would like the opportunity to rectify this situation by appearing on the show and educating the public (and the doctors) about RA and why it is very different from OA. To learn more about Rheumatoid Arthritis and similar diseases, please visit www.IAAMovement.org.