Enhancing Primary Care Management of Osteoarthritis in Europe

Outline of training for practice teams

# Overview

The NICE Guideline for managing patients with osteoarthritis (OA) (see link on final page) includes recommendations that can be summarised as:

1. Diagnosis of OA based on clinical, not radiological, criteria
2. Provision of clear verbal and written information for patients with OA
3. Healthcare professionals to support patients to self-manage OA
   1. To manage pain appropriately
   2. To achieve weight loss if overweight or obese
   3. To become more physically active and undertake appropriate exercises
4. Monitoring and follow-up as appropriate
5. Timely referral for joint replacement if warranted by symptoms

There is evidence to suggest that this guideline is not implemented widely and a recent research study by Keele University (Managing Osteoarthritis in Consultations (MOSAICS) study), involving practices in Shropshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire, sought to implement the guideline by extending the principles of chronic disease management to OA and implementing a “support for self-management” approach.

In the MOSAICS study:

* GPs were offered training to make small changes to the way they managed consultations with older patients with persistent joint pain (knee, hip and hand OA) including the use of an Osteoarthritis Guidebook and a computer template integrated with the clinical IT system.
* Practice nurses, nurse practitioners and health care support workers, who already use a range of relevant skills and techniques in supporting patients with long-term conditions, were offered training to support people with OA:
* Knowledge update on OA, including simple joint assessment
* Exploring a patient’s understanding of OA and impact on his or her life
* Framing explanations and recommendations around this, including “key messages” and goal-setting
* Supporting people to self-manage their OA
  + Advising on analgesic management
  + Advising on physical activity, particularly with co-morbidities
  + Demonstrating specific exercises for joint mobility and muscle strengthening
  + Motivating, monitoring and overcoming obstacles

Having completed the research study and an implementation pilot, we are now in the implementation phase and seeking to demonstrate the application of these principles in primary care in five European countries (Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Portugal and UK).

# Implementation models

In the UK, primary health care is based in general practices, typically consisting of a group of GPs with practice nurses and, occasionally, physiotherapists. Nurses may have extended roles, as nurse practitioners, able to diagnose and prescribe but more often manage long term conditions and see patients referred by the GPs. Health care assistants may also be involved – not qualified as nurses but trained in routine tasks such as weight management. GPs can refer to physiotherapists, usually based in community hospitals, where treatment is free. Some patients choose to pay for private physiotherapy or specialist referral. GP referrals to specialists are often through MSK pathways, involving community clinics.

In the UK, implementation so far has followed the model of GP diagnosis and initial advice then referral to a practice nurse for further advice and supported self-management, which may be in dedicated clinics or within routine consultations for chronic conditions. Alternative models that may be adopted in some practices are:

* GP, with practice-based physiotherapy
* GP with health trainer (not a health care professional)
* Nurse practitioner
* First contact physiotherapy practitioner

More recently, we have developed implementation models based on community resources away from general practice and able to refer to GPs as needed:

* Healthy lifestyle advisers / health trainers
* Retail pharmacists

Different countries and localities are likely to deliver enhanced OA care in different ways and we hope to capture information on this and to learn from each other.

## Clinical Champions

Local clinical champions are an important resource for engaging and training practices and to provide continuing support. So far, we have used GP and nurse champions, professionals who are interested in the project, have already taken part in the training and who have teaching skills. As part of JIGSAW-E, we are involving patient champions as well.

# Written materials and e-Learning component

In collaboration with Keele University and the Royal College of General Practitioners, Arthritis Research UK has produced an online course module on musculo-skeletal conditions. This is free to all UK healthcare professionals and you are just asked to register on the site before using it. This is available at:

<https://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/health-professionals-and-students/core-skills-in-msk-care.aspx>

The whole module takes 4.5 hours to complete and it can be split into as many sessions as you wish or you can just select single components. All GPs and practice nurses are encouraged to work through at least the Osteoarthritis section of the module before attending the workshops.

# Practice-based workshops

The training plan we designed envisaged delivering two one hour workshops in general practices and this provides the most comprehensive training:

## *Workshop 1 – GPs, nurses and practice manager*

1 hour meeting at lunchtime or as convenient:

* Using the OA template
* NICE OA guidelines – core recommendations
* Natural history of OA
* Joint replacement and other major interventions
* Concepts of OA as: wear and repair, flares, a whole joint problem (including muscles and ligaments)
* Unhelpful beliefs and how to counter them

## *Workshop 2 – GPs*

1 hour meeting at lunchtime or as convenient:

* Recap and issues arising from previous workshop
* An “enhanced” GP consultation for OA – what and how?
* Making a diagnosis of OA – including red flags and role of imaging
* Giving the diagnosis – practical session
* Explaining OA – practical session
* Giving written information and involving nurse management
* Action plan and follow-up support, including audit

However, many GPs have found it impossible to accommodate this amount of training time and, for practice nurses, there is repetition when they attend the two -day course, so we have also produced a slide set for a single session for GPs.

# Practice nurse training

For practice nurses, there is a two-day training workshop, held at a central location, and we try to ensure that at least one nurse from each practice will attend..

The main purpose of this short course is to give practice nurses the confidence to implement the NICE guidance for management of OA, including:

* Understanding the clinical basis for diagnosing OA, with an awareness of other conditions and "red flags"
* Exploring health beliefs and impact of OA on a patient's life
* Giving patients a clear diagnosis and explanation of OA
* Giving positive messages about natural history and treatment options
* Advising on pain relief, exercise and weight management and providing good written information and other resources
* Supporting self-management through goal-setting and review

This is an informal workshop-type course, utilising the knowledge and experience of participants and exploring how management of OA fits with current management of long term conditions in primary care. Day 2 focuses on practical aspects of OA consultations, providing advice to patients and demonstrating appropriate exercises. We also use simulated patients, with a typical OA scenario (attached) as a group exercise to practice consultation skills. The outline programme and slide set is included in this training pack.

# Developing GP clinical champions

Implementing this OA programme requires considerable educational input and we use a “training the trainers” approach to support this, through clinical champions. Their role is to deliver the practice-based training and act as informal mentors and supporters at individual practices, and they need preparation and support. Having initially run a half-day workshop for a small group of newly recruited champions, preparation is now usually on a 1:1 basis.

Champions are given a training pack with programmes, PowerPoint presentations and support materials (e.g. ARUK resources and OA Handbook) and, ideally, should complete the eLearning package and attend a 2-day nurse training course as preparation.

The workshop for champions was designed to be informal, interactive and flexible, with content and pace dependent on the prior experience of the champions as educators. Indicative content includes:

1. What are we trying to achieve in practices:
   1. Patient-centred consultations, exploring impact of OA as well as symptoms
   2. Confidence in diagnosing OA clinically, reducing reliance on imaging and explaining reasons to patients
   3. Giving clear diagnoses, explanations and key messages about natural history, tailored to needs of individual patients
   4. Practical advice and support for self-management
2. Facilitating behaviour change in health professionals:
   1. Understanding and valuing current practice
   2. Appropriate knowledge input
   3. Credibility, motivation, conviction
   4. Rehearsal and feedback
3. Small group methods:
   1. Facilitated group discussion
   2. Generating, capturing and working with their ideas
   3. Simulation exercises (not role-play!) using trios
4. Practice at delivering components of the practice workshops to the group, getting feedback and sharing ideas
5. Discussion and arrangements for continuing support

# Useful links

Nice Guideline OA 2014:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg177>

NICE Quality Standards 2015:  
<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs87/resources/osteoarthritis-2098913613253>

ARUK online Musculo-skeletal learning package (4.5 hours; free to all UK healthcare professionals):

<https://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/health-professionals-and-students/core-skills-in-msk-care.aspx>

Arthritis Research UK information for health professionals:

General information

<http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/Home/health%20professionals%20and%20students.aspx>

Keeping moving booklet for patients

<http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/shop/products/publications/patient-information/living-with-arthritis/keep-moving.aspx>

Sheffield MSK website – information for professionals and patients

<http://www.sheffieldkneeandhippain.com/>