COMMUNITY-BASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR OSTEOARTHRITIS: THE EMERGING ROLE OF NON-HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

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OA is a highly prevalent condition in primary care, and management guidelines were published in the UK by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence in 2008 and revised in 2014. Despite its prevalence, OA management is not seen as a high priority for primary care, and patients often believe that little can be done. Evidence suggests that management of patients presenting with OA is not in line with published guidance and core treatments such as exercise are not routinely offered early on in the course of the condition, indicating that there is a need to improve and optimize care of people with OA. There is limited evidence as to the best way to deliver core treatments such as exercise, particularly when considering who should deliver exercise advice and prescription and where it should be delivered. Previous research has demonstrated that exercise interventions delivered by healthcare professionals were found not to have significantly different effects compared with interventions delivered by non-healthcare professionals, suggesting both can produce positive changes in exercise levels. Patients are sometimes reluctant to seek help for OA, considering it to be simply part of the ageing process. Studies have shown that among patients consulting for knee OA, less than half had tried exercise as a treatment and this was mostly self- rather than doctor-initiated. Clearly there is a need to increase the uptake of exercise and appropriately support those with OA to become more active. A broader community based approach e.g. health trainers, exercise/sport science graduates, qualified gym instructors, may be a viable option. This session will examine the need and potential for community based, non-healthcare professional facilitated exercise programmes, specifically for those with OA. This session will also identify current community based roles that may be suitable to support individuals with OA to manage their condition through exercise and examine the potential training needs for such roles.

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