I05 THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS: THE PERCEPTIONS OF PEOPLE WITH ARTHRITIS AND OSTEOARTHRITIS

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Background: The role criteria for health professionals are often defined by professional bodies and surveys have been conducted to identify the role characteristics of nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists working within rheumatology. But relatively little work has been carried out to explore the knowledge and skills that people with RA and OA would like health professionals to have to address their health needs. The objective of this study was to identify the knowledge and skills health professionals require from the perspective of people with RA and OA.
**Methods:** Two focus groups were conducted in London in 2011. People with RA and OA were recruited nationally through patient support organisations. The condition-specific focus groups lasted for 90 min and used a phenomenological approach to explore meaningful contacts with health professionals. The focus groups were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim.

**Results:** A total of 13 people took part in the focus groups (8 people with RA and 5 people with OA). Shared themes identified in both groups included pain as the most challenging symptom to manage, the need for individualized care (which included being listened to, understanding the impact of the condition, receiving condition-specific information and accessing support and advice) and the absence of access to health professionals. A theme specific to people with RA was the need for psychological support, especially when symptoms of the condition were heightened. Participants in both groups wanted health professionals to have the knowledge and skills to address all of the care aspects identified.

**Conclusion:** For care to be meaningful and relevant to people with RA and OA, we need to ensure that health professionals have the knowledge and skills to manage pain, conduct an effective consultation that is person-focused, have condition specific knowledge, provide appropriate advice, signpost patients to relevant services and offer psychological support.

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