AN EXPLORATION OF THE FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS FOR PEOPLE WITH OSTEOARTHRITIS TO ENGAGE IN EXERCISE: AN EXPLORATORY APPROACH WITH PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT

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Background: The benefits of exercise on general health are well publicized for people with OA. However, there is a lack of engagement in healthy activity and exercise by people with OA, and despite the known benefit of exercise, there is a lack of understanding of the factors that facilitate people with OA engaging in physical activity and exercise. The aim of the study was to explore the perceptions of patient and public Involvement representatives with OA on the facilitators and barriers for their engagement in exercise.

Methods: Using a qualitative semi-structured interview, transcripts of the participants’ conversations with the interviewer were analysed using thematic analysis.

Results: Seven separate themes were identified that acted as facilitators and barriers for people with OA to engage in exercise. These were type of exercise, benefits of exercise, drawbacks of exercise, effects of exercise, public information, psychological impact and social support. The main findings indicated that when a person knows and understands the health benefits of exercise, then they are more likely to engage in exercise; for those with OA, greater emphasis on physical activity rather than exercise may be more useful to encourage engagement; simple, clear consistent messages related to exercise for people with OA are required from all public health bodies and health care professionals.

Conclusion: These findings are useful to guide future research by informing which areas are important to people with OA when considering engagement in exercise. These may help with the design of studies and interventions. The use of language was particularly important when engaging with this group, with older people expressing feelings of isolation where particular terms relating to sport and exercise were used. There is a need for a consistent public information message to clearly communicate to the public about the benefits of exercise both in general health and for OA.

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