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Osteoarthritis: Models for appropriate care across the disease continuum



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ABSTRACT

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a leading cause of pain and disability worldwide. Despite the existence of evidence-based treatments and guidelines, substantial gaps remain in the quality of OA management. There is underutilization of behavioral and rehabilitative strategies to prevent and treat OA as well as a lack of processes to tailor treatment selection according to patient characteristics and preferences. There are emerging efforts in multiple countries to implement models of OA care, particularly focused on improving nonsurgical management. Although these programs vary in content and setting, key lessons learned include the importance of support from all stakeholders, consistent program delivery and tools, a coherent team to run the program, and a defined plan for outcome assessment. Efforts are still needed to develop, deliver, and evaluate models of care across the spectrum of OA, from prevention through end-stage disease, in order to improve care for this highly prevalent global condition.

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Osteoarthritis burden and gaps in management

Symptomatic osteoarthritis (OA), defined as having persistent symptoms in addition to positive imaging findings or functional limitations, is a leading cause of chronic pain and disability among adults [1]. It places a substantial burden at the individual level, affecting psychological well-being, sleep, work participation, social participation, management of comorbid health conditions, and health-related quality of life [2]. OA also has a tremendous societal and public health impact. For example, the 2010 Global Burden of Disease Survey found that knee and hip OA were responsible for 17 million years lived with disability worldwide [1]; the burden is likely higher when other joints are considered. OA is associated with increased healthcare utilization and costs as well as higher non-healthcare-related costs including work force loss, productivity loss, and formal and informal caregiving [2]. OA is the most rapidly growing cause of disability globally [3], and this rising epidemic will place increasing burden on both patients and healthcare systems. Rates of total joint replacement (TJR) surgeries are increasing dramatically in many developed countries [4], leading to concerns about meeting demands. Prevention and early management are critical to address the significant and increasing public health burden of OA.

Guidelines from professional societies emphasize that a combination of behavioral and clinical strategies is essential for OA management (Fig. 1) [5]. Core therapies, appropriate for all individuals with OA, include self-management education, exercise (land- or water-based structured progressed

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