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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Rationale and Design of the Staying Positive with Arthritis (SPA) Study: A Randomized Controlled Trial Testing the Impact of a Positive Psychology Intervention on Racial Disparities in Pain

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Abstract Body: Knee osteoarthritis is a painful, disabling condition that disproportionately affects African Americans. Existing arthritis treatments yield small to moderate improvements in pain and have not been effective at reducing racial disparities in the management of pain. The biopsychosocial model of pain and evidence from the positive psychology literature, suggest that increasing positive psychological skills (e.g., gratitude, kindness) could improve pain and functioning and reduce disparities in osteoarthritis pain management. Activities to cultivate positive psychological skills have been developed and validated; however, they have not been tested in patients with osteoarthritis, their effects on racial differences in health outcomes have not been examined, and evidence of their effects on health outcomes in patients with other chronic illnesses is of limited quality. In this article we describe the rationale and design of Staving Positive with Arthritis (SPA) study, a randomized controlled trial in which 180 African American and 180 White primary care patients with chronic pain from knee osteoarthritis will be randomized to a 6-week program of either positive skill-building activities or neutral control activities. The primary outcomes will be self-reported pain and functioning as measured by the WOMAC Osteoarthritis Index. We will assess these primary outcomes and potential, exploratory psychosocial mediating variables at an in-person baseline visit and by telephone at 1, 3, and 6 months following completion of the assigned program. If effective, the SPA program would be a novel, theoretically-informed psychosocial intervention to improve quality and equity of care in the management of chronic pain from osteoarthritis.

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