INAHTA Briefs

Issue 2005/25

Title **Effectiveness of Physical Therapy, Restricted to Electrotherapy and Exercise, for Osteoarthritis of the Knee**

Agency **NOKC, The Norwegian Knowledge Centre for Health Services (former SMM)**
P.O. Box 7004, St. Olavs plass, NO-0130 Oslo, Norway;
Tel: +47 23 25 50 00, Fax: +47 23 25 50 10; www.kunnskapssenteret.no

Reference Report no 7-2004, ISBN 82-8121-007-0

Aim

To evaluate the effectiveness of physical therapy, restricted to electrotherapy and exercise, for osteoarthritis of the knee. The clinical endpoints were pain, physical function, sickness days, and quality of life.

Conclusions and results

Both home-based exercise and exercise led by a physical therapist improved pain, function, and quality of life in patients with osteoarthritis of the knee. The exercise programs must last for at least 8 weeks to have significant effects.

Both laser and TENS had significant effects on pain relief by the end of treatment (2-4 weeks). However, evidence for the effects by laser is weaker than for TENS. There is a lack of evidence regarding effect on osteoarthritis of the knee after treatments including ultrasound and pulsed electromagnetic fields.

The effect of physiotherapy (exercise, laser, and TENS) persists for 1 to 3 months after the end of treatment.

Methods

The report is based on two existing systematic reviews (from the Netherlands and Canada), in addition to an updated systematic review on studies published from 1998 to January 2004. Relevant databases searched were the Cochrane Library, DARE, INAHTA database, PEDro, National Guidelines Clearinghouse, OHE Economic Evaluations Database, NHS Economic Evaluation Database, MEDLINE, and EMBASE. Systematic reviews and randomized controlled trials were included and meta-analysis was performed. The report includes 36 randomized controlled studies and 10 systematic reviews.

Written by Nilsen EM, Bjordal JM, Holm I, Johansen O, Zapffe K, NOKC, Norway