



Title Viscosupplementation for the Treatment of Osteoarthritis of the Knee
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Aim

To evaluate the effectiveness, safety, and cost effectiveness of viscosupplementation in treating osteoarthritis (OA) of the knee.

Conclusions and results

A series of meta-analyses and assessment reports on the different types of intra-articular hyaluronic acid viscosupplements available in Canada were analyzed. AETMIS concluded that viscosupplementation compared to placebo offers clinically modest relief of knee OA symptoms over a period that could last up to several weeks. Furthermore, it is a safe short-term treatment. These conclusions are based on secondary analyses studies of several small primary studies of poor methodological quality. Available data did not help distinguish differences in the effectiveness of any one product over the others. It was equally impossible to identify patient subgroups more likely to benefit from this treatment compared with other currently available therapeutic modalities. The cost effectiveness based on economic studies of this treatment compared to placebo could not be established owing to discrepancies in the clinical data used and the methodological limitations of the economic studies examined. Public coverage for this treatment would lead to increased spending of several tens of millions of dollars per year and would command significant professional resources when Quebec's health-care system experiences a shortage of health resources. Hence, AETMIS considers that it is not currently justified to contemplate funding viscosupplementation for all patients with knee OA. It nonetheless raises the possibility that this product could be offered as a last-resort treatment to patients who do not achieve pain relief from conventional therapies, or for whom these are contraindicated.

Recommendations

Viscosupplementation should not be offered to all patients suffering from knee OA. However, the Ministry of Health and Social Services could examine the possib-

ility of exceptionally offering it to people who have not experienced pain relief from recognized conventional treatments, as do some third-party payers. AETMIS also recommends that granting agencies should encourage universities to pursue clinical research on viscosupplementation as part of the research areas or programs dedicated to musculoskeletal diseases or chronic pain.

Methods

Literature search in medical databases (MEDLINE, EMBASE, etc), HTA (INAHTA), and insurance companies for meta-analysis of randomized trials on effectiveness; safety data from published secondary studies and registries; economic studies and reports (until December 2006).