



SOUTHLAKE
REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE

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As described to Bone and Joint Canada

The Arthritis Program (TAP) | Southlake Regional Health Centre

General program

The Osteoarthritis (OA) Therapeutic Education Program located in Newmarket, Ontario, is a 6-week group education and exercise program that focuses on symptom control and self-management for individuals with OA. The program is available to individuals with OA in any, or multiple joints and is offered to all adult age groups. There are approximately 25 individuals within the program in each session. The interprofessional team involved with the program includes: a rheumatologist, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, a dietitian, a pharmacist and a kinesiologist. A small fee covers the cost of a resource workbook provided that contains all classroom material.

Program

The program offers different schedule options. One option includes 6 weekly sessions which are 4 hours in length. This 6 week program is offered consecutively throughout the year. An optional weekend program, held on three consecutive Saturdays (9-4pm), is offered three times a year.

Referral process: The program requires a referral from a physician or nurse practitioner that includes a diagnosis of OA. The participant's intake information is reviewed to identify those who may require individual assessment, intervention, and/or for whom the OA program may not be optimal.

Intake: Within the OA program, the intake process requires the completion of questionnaires and surveys to better understand a participant's functional ability. Some of the questionnaires include: the Western Ontario and McMaster Arthritis Index (WOMAC), the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), an OA knowledge questionnaire, and the modified Health Assessment Questionnaire (mHAQ). A Timed Up and Go (TUAG) is conducted on Day 1 of the program.

Education: Every session in the six week program includes 3 hours of classroom group education. The education includes presentations and interactive learning opportunities which are all framed to instill the theme of hope.

- Rheumatologist (or designate) – understanding osteoarthritis and how it differs from other types of arthritis; how OA affects the joint and current recommended strategies for treatment
- Pharmacists – understanding the use of medications and other products including: pain relievers, anti-inflammatory medications, cortisone injections and natural health products
- Occupational Therapist (OT) – lifestyle management, the importance of proper footwear, falls prevention strategies, coping strategies, how to manage the emotional impact of dealing with chronic pain and how to maximize functional independence
- Physical Therapist (PT) – how to take care of your back and neck, the importance of exercise, recommended sleeping positions and pain coping strategies
- Dietitian – healthy eating habits, how to read nutrition labels and how to maintain a healthy weight
- Kinesiologist- exercise strategies to maximize success including suggested pool therapies

Learning is enhanced by including experiences from previous OA program participants who share their personal journey and the role that the TAP team played in their care. This occurs on the first day of the program.

The educational sessions are offered over the Ontario Telehealth Network (OTN) to remote sites across Ontario, twice a year.

Exercises: Each weekly session includes 45 minutes of in-class exercise. Exercises are included for all the joints including upper extremities, neck, low back and the lower extremities. The program includes range of motion as well as strengthening exercises. There are additional community options offered to those who wish to continue exercise after completion of the education program.

Treatment: Program participants can request one-on-one appointments with individual team members (e.g. medication reviews, foot and/or hand assessments for orthotics or splints, personalized healthy eating habit strategies). There is also access to a social worker (e.g. stress management group sessions).

Follow up: Individuals are invited to attend a recall class 6 months after completing the program to review their progress and classroom content. Questionnaires completed at the beginning and end of the program are also completed for the 6 month recall class. They are provided during the program and are returned at 6 months. Participants are invited to access the team when questions arise or new issues emerge.

Linkages:

Primary care: The program is part of services provided by the Southlake Regional Health Centre. It has strong linkages with the Southlake Family Health Team and provides teaching opportunities for family practice residents within the family health team.

The program is aligned with musculoskeletal programs and outpatient medicine programs within Southlake Health Centre. At Southlake, TAP participates in a shared care model between orthopaedic surgeons and rheumatologists. Referrals for the OA program also come from the emergency department within the hospital. All communication from the program occurs with the referring primary healthcare provider and/or rheumatologist.

Community: Community linkages which have resulted in exercise programs run by the local parks and recreation department for participants to continue with exercises in the community.

Participants are encouraged to explore additional therapy options in the community, like Tai Chi, and Yoga.

Evaluation

The program's team members encourage participants to practice personal goal setting, including physical activity goals. Patients are given tools to empower them to gain confidence in their care.

The program tracks the following outcome measure on admission and at 6 months:

- Osteoarthritis Knowledge Questionnaire
- Modified Health Assessment Questionnaire (mHAQ)
- Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS)
- WOMAC Index
- Timed up and Go