

August 9, 2018

Health Quality Ontario
Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists has had opportunity to review the recommendation of Health Quality Ontario to publicly fund structured education and neuromuscular exercise programs for the management of persons with osteoarthritis of the hip and/or knee. We offer the following comments;

- Occupational therapists work with clients with osteoarthritis of the hip and/or knee when this chronic disease impacts their ability to manage day to day occupations that are important and meaningful to them – self care, home management skills, work or leisure pursuits or community mobility.
- The Society is generally supportive of the HQO recommendation for funding of a structured education and neuromuscular exercise program, however, it is noted that the evidence for this approach appears to be developing and the strength of evidence could be more convincing. Advancing programs in Ontario should be tied to planned review and evaluation to assure value for money investment of public funds.
- Occupational therapists recognize the benefits reported by consumers of these programs and suggest there is a value in engaging persons with osteoarthritis in programs that underline their personal responsibility for chronic disease self management. Engaging a client's locus of control can improve adherence to behaviours, activity and practices that are health promoting and can minimize risks that can lead to increased health care costs.
- We sought evidence of the outcome impacts of studied programs on occupational performance that would have an economic benefit, for example: Are people able to stay at/return to work more? Are they visiting health professionals/hospitals less often? Do they need less help (housekeeping, PSW) at home? There is some data in the papers reviewed on improvements in ADLs but it is unclear whether these have been attached to an economic factor. An investment in funding of such programs would be best supported by data that supports answers to the type of questions we note above.

- Occupational therapists also looked for evidence of whether proposed programs had impacts on clients' mental health. Does reduction in pain result in less incidence of depression in GLA:D participants for example?
- In light of potential demand for the proposed programs, the Society would suggest that a variety of regulated health professionals who can demonstrate the skills, training and competencies to deliver the programs should be recognized to be funded to offer such programs. This might be necessary if there is anticipation of need greater than current supply of physiotherapy services. We note that the GLA:D website is clear that professionals must meet certain criteria to be eligible for their training, however, they note "*We recognize that other professionals may be eligible to provide the program. We ask that these individuals fit the following criteria:*"
 - *Have at least 2 years of clinical experience working with patients with chronic disease, including working with patients with hip and/or knee osteoarthritis.*
 - *Have experience leading group education and exercise sessions.....*

Occupational therapists who have experience in addressing the needs of persons living with osteoarthritis might be amongst those interested in developing further skills to deliver the program in their practice or as part of an interprofessional team.

To address this point, funding for the proposed services might best be funded as a program that could be delivered by professionals who have the credentials to deliver the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed recommendation. Please forward any questions to our attention and we'd be pleased to discuss these further.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director

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