Pre-habilitation for patients awaiting total knee replacement in the United Kingdom National Health Service: A review of publicly facing information

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12 Abstract.

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- 13 **INTRODUCTION:** Approximately 14,000 21,500 individuals per year are dissatisfied with the outcome of their Total Knee
- Replacement (TKR) in the UK National Health Service (NHS). National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines
- recommend that future research should evaluate whether a 'full programme of pre-habilitation' can improve outcomes for
- patients awaiting TKR. The aim of this review was to describe current pre-habilitation practice for patients awaiting TKR in
- the UK NHS, to inform future research.
- 18 METHODS: Two reviewers independently undertook electronic searches for publicly available information sheets (PIS)
- from websites of UK NHS Trusts that included detail about pre-habilitation for patients awaiting TKR. One reviewer extracted data, and a second reviewer verified this.
- **RESULTS:** Fifty PIS, nine information videos and one web page from 59 NHS Trusts were identified. NHS Trusts most commonly provide patients with advice on pre-operative rehabilitation via a single appointment, combined with a PIS (36/59;
- 61.0%). NHS Trusts use appointments, PIS and video to provide patients awaiting TKR with information regarding pain
- control (46/58; 79.3%), exercise therapy (46/58; 79.3%), what to expect on the day of surgery and in-patient stay (58/58;
- ²⁵ 100%), lifestyle interventions (27/58; 46.6%), and adverse events (44/58; 75.9%).
- CONCLUSION: NHS Trusts commonly provided patients awaiting TKR with 'advice on pre-operative rehabilitation', however no NHS Trust provided a comprehensive programme of pre-habilitation. The results of this study will inform the development of a comprehensive, multi-modal pre-habilitation programme, to be tested in a future high-quality randomised controlled trial.
- 30 Keywords:

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31 **1. Introduction**

In 2019, more than 108,000 total knee replacements (TKR) were performed in the UK, costing the NHS over £700 million [1]. TKR remains a successful intervention for many people with painful knee osteoarthritis. However, dissatisfaction rates following TKR are commonly reported at 13-20%, which equates to approximately 14,000-21,500 individuals per year [2, 3]. Those who are dissatisfied following TKR, are likely to report persistent post-operative pain (often similar to pre-surgery), low levels of function and poor quality of life [4–6].

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Pre-habilitation, targeting factors associated with 42 poor outcomes is an approach used before many 43 common surgeries (e.g., cardiovascular, oncology) 44 as a way of improving outcomes post-surgery [7]. 45 Pre-habilitation aims to promote healthy behaviours 46 through needs-based prescription of exercise, 47 lifestyle advice, nutrition support and psychologi-48 cal interventions [7, 8]. Traditionally, pre-habilitation 49 for patients awaiting TKR has focussed on education 50 and exercise [8]. Education strategies are used to 51 address patient expectations as a means of improving 52 post-operative satisfaction [7]. Exercise is commonly 53 used to optimise pre-operative function as a way 54 of improving post-operative pain and function and 55 reducing post-operative complications [9]. However, 56 recent systematic reviews have concluded that 57 these traditional pre-habilitation programmes do not 58 improve pain, function or length of stay in hospital 50 following joint replacement [9, 10]. One explanation 60 for this is that there are a range of factors associated 61 with poor outcomes following surgery including age, 62 gender, comorbidities, expectations, pain, function, 63 and mental health [11-16]. Dissatisfaction following 64 surgery is therefore likely to be linked to a complex 65 inter-play between many factors [5]. Given this, 66 pre-habilitation approaches for patients awaiting 67 TKR need to evolve (in keeping with pre-habilitation 68 for patients awaiting cancer surgery) to include 69 interventions which support patients with nutrition, 70 medical optimisation, mental health, lifestyle factors 71 (e.g., smoking) and expectations [17, 18]. 72

Recent NICE guidelines made a strong rec-73 ommendation for clinical practice, that 'advice 74 on pre-operative rehabilitation' is provided for all 75 patients awaiting TKR (delivered as a single appoint-76 ment, individually or part of a group). The guidelines 77 were unable to recommend a 'full programme of 78 pre-habilitation' as clinical trials were too small 79 and under-powered to recommend implementation 80 [19]. However, the NICE concluded that there was 81 a clear signal from the research that pre-habilitation 82 has the potential to improve outcomes for patients 83 undergoing TKR and hypothesised that a substan-84 tial, multi-dimensional package of pre-habilitation 85 may improve outcomes for patients undergoing 86 TKR [19]. NICE recommended that future research 87 should develop and evaluate a 'full programme of 88 pre-habilitation', able to support patients with needs-89 based support with lifestyle factors (such as smoking, 90 alcohol consumption, dietary advice, and weight 91 loss), activity levels (via exercise interventions) and 92 mental health concerns (via counselling, cognitive 93

behavioural interventions). This recommendation has been supported by two recent systematic reviews [9, 10].

To inform the development of a comprehensive pre-habilitation programme, we first wanted to understand what constitutes current practice in the UK NHS for patients awaiting TKR [20]. Therefore, the primary aim of this review of publicly facing information was to describe current pre-habilitation practice for patients awaiting TKR in the UK NHS. The secondary aim was to evaluate what models of prehabilitation are provided for patients awaiting TKR in terms of how they are delivered, the content of the interventions and the staffing groups they are delivered by. The final aim was to describe adherence with current NICE guidelines for pre-habilitation for patients awaiting TKR.

2. Methods

Two reviewers (AM and GS) undertook initial independent electronic searches of Google during January 2021, for publicly available patient information sheets (PIS) or information videos from websites of UK NHS Trusts. As this was a survey of publicly facing information, no NHS Trusts were directly contacted as part of the search strategy. The following search terms were used:

1. rehabilitation, knee replacement, nhs	120
2. physiotherapy, knee replacement, nhs.	121
3. pre-op, knee replacement, nhs	122
4. pre-habilitation, knee replacement, nhs	123
5. patient information, knee replacement, nh	S 124
6. enhanced recovery, knee replacement, nhs	125
2.1. Inclusion criteria	120

Any PIS or information, provided by an NHS Trust for patients awaiting TKR, which provided patients with information aimed at improving their outcomes or expectation post-surgery. For example, advice on exercises, lifestyle changes or education aimed at influencing expectations.

2.2. Exclusion criteria

Data concerning pre-operative medical examinations used to determine anaesthetic risk were not extracted and analysed, as they were not relevant to the aims of this current study.

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The list of PIS were checked for duplications and duplicates were excluded. Searching continued until review of one full search page returned no relevant PIS as conducted in two other recent surveys of publicly facing information [21, 22]. Results of the separate searches were compared, and any disagreements resolved through discussion.

145 2.3. Data extraction

A data capture form was designed by the study 146 team and piloted by two authors (AM and GS) on 147 three PIS. Disagreements were discussed and final 148 adaptations to the form were made. One reviewer 149 (AM), then extracted data from the PIS and video 150 links and populated the data capture form. All the 151 extracted data was verified by a second reviewer (GS) 152 and three disagreements (regarding exercise categori-153 sation) were resolved through discussion. 154

155 2.4. Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the number of PIS and information videos that reported on pre-determined categories, established as part of the piloting of the data capture form. Data were described as a percentage of the total number of NHS Trusts surveyed (59), unless otherwise stated.

162 **3. Results**

A total of 78 web-links were clicked. Web-links 163 either led directly to a PIS, or to an NHS Trust 164 webpage. Once duplicate links were excluded (19), 165 50 PIS, nine information videos and one web page 166 (providing limited information about a face-to-face 167 intervention provided by one NHS Trust) from 59 168 NHS Trusts were included. Of the 50 PIS, 39 reported 169 date of production, and 25 (64%) of these were dated 170 2017 onwards (date range 2012 to 2020). 171

3.1. PIS and Video information content

The content from 50 PIS and nine information 173 videos from 58 NHS Trusts were analysed to under-174 stand the information provided to patients awaiting 175 TKR. Whilst no NHS Trust provided patients with 176 supervised support with factors that may affect out-177 come, all Trusts provided patients with pre-operative 178 information aimed at improving expectations and 179 outcome, including pain control (46/58; 79.3%), 180

exercise therapy (46/58; 79.3%), what to expect on the day of surgery and in-patient stay (58/58; 100%), lifestyle interventions (e.g. smoking cessation, healthy eating) (27/58; 46.6%), and possible adverse events (44/58; 75.9%) associated with the surgery (e.g. deep venous thrombosis, infection).

3.1.1. Pain control

The majority of NHS Trusts (46/58; 79.3%) provided patients with information regarding pain control. This typically included advice for patients to expect pain (46/58; 79.3%) and swelling (39/58; 67.2%) post-surgery. Patients were commonly advised on the analgesia that would be available to them on the ward (43/58; 74.1%) and the use of ice (32/58; 55.2%) to help them control their pain and swelling.

3.1.2. Exercise therapy

Patients were provided with information regarding post-operative exercise by 79.3% (46/58) of NHS Trusts. The outlined exercises commonly targeted quadriceps (46/58; 79.3%) strengthening and improving range of motion of the operated knee (45/58; 77.6%). Other commonly prescribed exercises included gastrocnemius (29/58; 50%), gluteal (14/58; 24.1%), hamstring (14/58; 24.1%) and functional (12/58; 20.7%) strengthening (exercises that replicated a daily task such as stepping up a step or standing from a chair). The majority (42/58) of NHS trusts provided patients with a combination on written texts and images of their post-operative exercises. Four NHS Trusts provided the information via video only.

3.1.3. The day of surgery and in-patient stay

All NHS Trusts provided information on what to expect on the day of surgery (58/58; 100%), during the inpatient stay (58/58; 100%) and at the point of discharge (58/58; 100%). Patients were advised about what to bring into hospital with them (58/58; 100%), that they would see a physiotherapist to help them mobilise within a day of surgery (53/58; 91.4%) and the expected length of stay in hospital (52/58; 89.7%).

3.1.4. Lifestyle interventions

Less than half of the NHS Trusts (27/58; 46.6%) advised patients about lifestyle changes that could improve their outcomes after surgery. Advice on the benefits of exercise and activity (21/58; 36.2%) and cutting down/stopping smoking (21/58; 36.2%) were the most common lifestyle interventions advised.



** Pulmonary Embolism.

Fig. 1. Number of NHS Trusts providing patients with information about specific adverse events.



Fig. 2. Information provided as part of face-to-face session.

Almost one third of NHS Trusts advised patients
about a balanced diet (18/58; 31.0%) and advice on
maintaining a healthy weight (18/58; 31.0%). Other
lifestyle interventions included alcohol intake (13/58;
22.4%) and the possible benefits of a positive mindset
(4/58; 6.9%).

3.1.5. Adverse events

Potential adverse events following TKR were
 described by 75.9% (44/58) of NHS Trusts in their

patient facing information. The adverse events most patients were informed about are reported in Fig. 1. 239

3.2. Face-to-face appointments 240

The data provided in the PIS and video information241does not provide definitive information regarding the242content and staffing of the face-to-face appointments,243however the information in Fig. 2 provides a summary the data that was obtainable. The information244

provided to patients in the face-to-face appointments 246 appeared to be no different to those described in the 247 PIS and video information (Fig. 2). However, 74.4% 248 (32/43) of NHS Trusts providing face-to-face inter-249 ventions described using staff members outside of 250 physiotherapy such as occupational therapy (24/43), 251 nurses (22/43), doctors (8/43), and dietitians (2/43). 252 More than one staff group were described as being 253 present in 60.5% (26/43) of NHS Trusts providing a 254 face-to-face appointment. 255

256 3.3. Adherence with the NICE guidelines

The majority of NHS Trusts adhered to the 257 NICE guidelines (42/59; 71.2%) by providing 258 'advice on pre-operative rehabilitation' via a single 259 appointment. This appointment was most often sup-260 plemented with either a PIS (36/59; 61.0%), video 261 information (5/59; 8.4%), or both (1/59; 1.7%). Other 262 modes of delivery included provision of only a PIS 263 (13/59; 22.0%), video information (3/59; 5.1%), or 264 appointment (1/59; 1.7%). No NHS Trust provided 265 patients awaiting TKR with more than one face-to-266 face pre-habilitation appointment. 267

268 **4. Discussion**

This paper reports the findings of a review of 269 publicly facing information for patients awaiting 270 TKR in the UK NHS. The majority of NHS Trusts 271 (42/59; 71.2%) adhered to the NICE guidelines 272 by providing patients with 'advice on pre-operative 273 rehabilitation' via a single appointment. Most com-274 monly, this appointment was combined with a PIS 275 (36/59; 61.0%). These appointments and PIS were 276 used to provide patients with information regard-277 ing pain control, exercise therapy, what to expect 278 on the day of surgery and in-patient stay, lifestyle 279 interventions, and possible adverse events associ-280 ated with the surgery. No NHS Trust in this review 281 provided patients with information regarding a 'full 282 programme of pre-habilitation' as outlined in the 283 research recommendations in the NICE guidelines 284 [19]. 285

A 'full programme pre-habilitation' addressing factors associated with poor outcome following surgery could make people better able to deal with the possible complications, promote understanding and engagement with postoperative rehabilitation, and prepare the person better for existing with a replaced joint [19]. NICE research recommendations (2020) suggest a comprehensive pre-habilitation programme for patients awaiting TKR could include exercise interventions, psychological assessment (with counselling or cognitive therapy), weight control (via dietary support and advice), pain control (via pain medication review, exercise and education), interventions to maximise independence (via assessment of activities of daily living and equipment provision), and lifestyle advice (via support with smoking and alcohol reduction or cessation).

This review highlights that as part of current standard care, patients awaiting TKR are educated on optimisation of their pain control, what to expect during their in-patient care, and potential adverse events. In addition, patients are also asked to consider several complex behavioural changes (e.g., smoking cessation, healthy eating, weight loss, increased physical activity and exercise) to reduce the impact of lifestyle factors associated with poorer outcomes. Individuals who are obese, smoke or drink alcohol excessively, are at higher risk of poor outcomes and post-operative complications following TKR [23-25]. Almost half of the NHS Trusts in this review advised patients awaiting TKR to consider lifestyle changes however, achieving meaningful lifestyle and behaviour change is a complex process for many people [26, 27]. Explaining the risk of continuing with a behaviour which may be detrimental to their long-term health, does not lead to significant changes in behaviour, and thus current approaches used within the NHS are unlikely to achieve meaningful change [28]. Patients may require substantial support to achieve meaningful change in their lifestyle habits than is currently on offer from routine NHS services [28].

The NICE guidelines highlighted the detrimental impact that mental health problems can have on outcomes following joint replacement [19]. Very few NHS Trusts provided patients with information regarding their mental health. Mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, are consistently demonstrated as prognostic for poor outcomes following TKR [5, 25, 29]. It is unclear whether physiotherapists can successfully deliver interventions which directly target anxiety and depression [30]. However, physiotherapy interventions can improve the quality of life of patients with mental health disorders [31]. Interventions which may directly, or indirectly improve pain, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and physical activity have the potential to reduce the impact of mental health conditions [32]. A full programme of pre-habilitation would need to screen patients for mental health conditions and offer

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interventions which improve outcomes such as counselling or cognitive behavioural therapy [19].

It is a research priority to design and evaluate a full 347 programme of pre-habilitation for patients awaiting 348 TKR [19]. This review of publicly facing information 349 reveals that this full programme of pre-habilitation 350 would involve a large deviation from current prac-351 tice with NHS. It would require significant resources 352 and a multi-disciplinary approach. Future research in 353 this field will require development of a complex inter-354 vention, to be tested in a future randomised controlled 355 trial. 356

4.1. Strengths and limitations

The strengths of this study include the large number of retrieved PIS from a range of NHS Trusts across the United Kingdom. Two reviewers undertook the searches and data extraction, in line with current best practice. Therefore, it is sufficient to provide an overview of current practice, answer the research question and guide future research.

The limitations of this reviews of this nature are that they are reliant on the quality of the information provided on the PIS and NHS Trust website. It therefore remains unclear how well the 59 NHS Trusts reflect current practice across the UK NHS. Not all NHS Trusts provide online information for patients and keep the information up to date.

372 **5.** Conclusion

The majority of NHS Trusts adhere to the cur-373 rent NICE guidelines regarding pre-habilitation for 374 patients awaiting TKR, by providing 'advice on pre-375 operative rehabilitation' via an appointment. NICE 376 guidelines suggest that it is a research priority to 377 evaluate whether a comprehensive multi-modal pre-378 habilitation programme (with the potential of offer 379 patients the necessary support required to adopt 380 these behaviour changes) can improve outcomes for 381 patients undergoing TKR. This review highlights that 382 this would involve a significant change from current 383 NHS practice and potentially, large amounts of NHS 384 resource. Therefore, a comprehensive programme of 385 intervention development and evaluation (via a high-386 quality randomised controlled trial) is required to 387 evaluate whether a full programme of pre-habilitation 388 can improve outcomes for patients undergoing TKR.

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Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to report.

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