The feasibility of a randomised controlled trial of physiotherapy for adults with joint hypermobility syndrome

Shea Palmer,1* Fiona Cramp,1 Emma Clark,2 Rachel Lewis,3 Sara Brookes,4 William Hollingworth,4 Nicky Welton,4 Howard Thom,4 Rohini Terry,4 Katharine A Rimes5 and Jeremy Horwood4

1Department of Allied Health Professions, University of the West of England, Bristol, UK
2Musculoskeletal Research Unit, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK
3North Bristol NHS Trust, Bristol, UK
4Bristol Randomised Trials Collaboration, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK
5Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King’s College London, London, UK

*Corresponding author

Declared competing interests of authors: Dr Emma Clark is a member of the Health Technology Assessment Elective and Emergency Specialist Care Panel. Dr Howard Thom has undertaken consulting work for Novartis Pharmaceuticals, ICON plc and Eli Lilly and Company. The work had no connection to joint hypermobility or Ehlers–Danlos syndrome. To our knowledge the organisations have no commercial interests in these areas.

Published June 2016
DOI: 10.3310/hta20470

Plain English summary

Feasibility of physiotherapy for adults with joint hypermobility syndrome
Health Technology Assessment 2016; Vol. 20: No. 47
DOI: 10.3310/hta20470

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk
Plain English summary

We did an initial study to see if it is worth doing a much larger study of physiotherapy for people with joint hypermobility syndrome (JHS). People with JHS are often called ‘double-jointed’ but the condition is far from trivial, causing joint pain and problems with physical and mental well-being. Physiotherapy might help, but there is no research evidence to show whether or not it works.

We spoke to groups of patients to understand how they live with JHS. They told us that it takes a long time to get diagnosed, JHS is unpredictable and it has a huge impact on their lives. Physiotherapy was best when their therapist understood JHS and treated their whole body, rather than concentrating on just one painful joint. We also spoke to health professionals who have an interest in JHS and they told us that patients need to be supported to better self-manage their condition.

Our patient research partners helped us to develop a physiotherapy intervention, which involves attending for six 30-minute sessions over a 4-month period. It aims to help patients to better understand JHS, to manage their condition better and to become more physically active. We compared people who got the new intervention with people who had a single advice session. People told us that they were generally enthusiastic about the advice session and the new physiotherapy intervention, and we learned a lot about doing a study in this area. It seems that a much larger study is worth doing in the future to find out whether or not physiotherapy really provides worthwhile benefits.
Criteria for inclusion in the Health Technology Assessment journal

Reports are published in Health Technology Assessment (HTA) if (1) they have resulted from work for the HTA programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

Reviews in Health Technology Assessment are termed ‘systematic’ when the account of the search appraisal and synthesis methods (to minimise biases and random errors) would, in theory, permit the replication of the review by others.

HTA programme

The HTA programme, part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), was set up in 1993. It produces high-quality research information on the effectiveness, costs and broader impact of health technologies for those who use, manage and provide care in the NHS. ‘Health technologies’ are broadly defined as all interventions used to promote health, prevent and treat disease, and improve rehabilitation and long-term care.

The journal is indexed in NHS Evidence via its abstracts included in MEDLINE and its Technology Assessment Reports inform National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance. HTA research is also an important source of evidence for National Screening Committee (NSC) policy decisions.

For more information about the HTA programme please visit the website: http://www.nets.nihr.ac.uk/programmes/hta

This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 10/98/05. The contractual start date was in March 2013. The draft report began editorial review in July 2015 and was accepted for publication in October 2015. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HTA programme or the Department of Health.

© Queen’s Printer and Controller of HMSO 2016. This work was produced by Palmer et al. under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health. This issue may be freely reproduced for the purposes of private research and study and extracts (or indeed, the full report) may be included in professional journals provided that suitable acknowledgement is made and the reproduction is not associated with any form of advertising. Applications for commercial reproduction should be addressed to: NIHR Journals Library, National Institute for Health Research, Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre, Alpha House, University of Southampton Science Park, Southampton SO16 7NS, UK.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Prepress Projects Ltd, Perth, Scotland (www.prepress-projects.co.uk).
Health Technology Assessment Editor-in-Chief

Professor Hywel Williams  Director, HTA Programme, UK and Foundation Professor and Co-Director of the Centre of Evidence-Based Dermatology, University of Nottingham, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

Professor Tom Walley  Director, NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies and Director of the EME Programme, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editors

Professor Ken Stein  Chair of HTA Editorial Board and Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

Professor Andree Le May  Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (EME, HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals)

Dr Martin Ashton-Key  Consultant in Public Health Medicine/Consultant Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Professor Matthias Beck  Chair in Public Sector Management and Subject Leader (Management Group), Queen's University Management School, Queen's University Belfast, UK

Professor Aileen Clarke  Professor of Public Health and Health Services Research, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, UK

Dr Tessa Crilly  Director, Crystal Blue Consulting Ltd, UK

Dr Eugenia Cronin  Senior Scientific Advisor, Wessex Institute, UK

Dr Peter Davidson  Director of NETSCC, HTA, UK

Ms Tara Lamont  Scientific Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Professor Elaine McColl  Director, Newcastle Clinical Trials Unit, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University, UK

Professor William McGuire  Professor of Child Health, Hull York Medical School, University of York, UK

Professor Geoffrey Meads  Professor of Health Sciences Research, Health and Wellbeing Research and Development Group, University of Winchester, UK

Professor John Norrie  Health Services Research Unit, University of Aberdeen, UK

Professor John Powell  Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK

Professor James Raftery  Professor of Health Technology Assessment, Wessex Institute, Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, UK

Dr Rob Riemsma  Reviews Manager, Kleijnen Systematic Reviews Ltd, UK

Professor Helen Roberts  Professor of Child Health Research, UCL Institute of Child Health, UK

Professor Jonathan Ross  Professor of Sexual Health and HIV, University Hospital Birmingham, UK

Professor Helen Snooks  Professor of Health Services Research, Institute of Life Science, College of Medicine, Swansea University, UK

Professor Jim Thornton  Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, UK

Professor Martin Underwood  Director, Warwick Clinical Trials Unit, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, UK

Please visit the website for a list of members of the NIHR Journals Library Board:
www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors

Editorial contact: nihredit@southampton.ac.uk