

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

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Plain English summary

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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.

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Editorial contact: nhredit@southampton.ac.uk

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