Occupational advice to help people return to work following lower limb arthroplasty: the OPAL intervention mapping study

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.
Plain English summary

Hip and knee replacements are regularly carried out for patients who work. There is a lack of evidence about these patients’ needs and how they return to work. Guidance to enable return to work after surgery is limited. There is, therefore, a need for structured occupational advice to help these patients.

The aim of this project was to develop a multidisciplinary occupational advice intervention for this patient population and assess if it could be delivered. The study also aimed to make recommendations about its further assessment in a clinical trial.

The study combined different methods of research (quantitative and qualitative) to identify the population likely to benefit, their current care, and the outcomes important to patients and health-care professionals. All of the information gathered was mapped through a framework (intervention mapping), which included a consensus process with stakeholders to develop the intervention. The intervention delivery was assessed for a small number of patients across orthopaedic departments, employer organisations and primary care networks.

The study involved 154 patients, 110 stakeholders (general practitioners, surgeons, employers and health professionals/nurses) and a survey of current care (152 respondents) to develop the intervention. The intervention included information resources, a personalised return-to-work plan and co-ordination from the health-care team to support the delivery of 33 patient and staff performance objectives. To support delivery, a range of tools (e.g. occupational checklists, patient workbooks and employer information), roles (e.g. return-to-work co-ordinator) and training resources were created. The intervention was assessed in 26 patients and staff, and showed high rates of adherence to the defined performance objectives.

The overall results demonstrated that the occupational advice intervention developed for hip and knee replacement patients is deliverable. The intervention warrants further research to assess its clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness as a tool to improve rates and timing of sustained return to work after surgery.
Criteria for inclusion in the Health Technology Assessment journal

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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.

This report

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