

## Osteoarthritis: A Leading Cause of Disability

The pain, stiffness, and swelling from OA can limit function and mobility and diminish quality of life. These symptoms may impinge on the ability to perform daily and work routines such as holding a cup, writing or typing, standing or sitting for long periods, bending and walking, or going up and down stairs.

OA is a chronic condition in many individuals who also have heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Physical activity is a recommended management strategy for all these conditions but can be more difficult for people with OA because of joint pain.

To learn more about the vision and strategies for reducing the burden of OA, read [A National Public Health Agenda for Osteoarthritis: 2020 Update](#)



### WHY OA MATTERS

- **Medical costs attributable to OA are significant** due to the effects of disability, comorbid disease, and treatment. These annual medical costs total \$65.5 billion, with an average cost per person per year of \$2,018.
- **OA is the second most costly health condition treated in U.S. hospitals**, at an annual cost of \$16.5 billion, or 4.3% of the combined cost for all hospitalizations. This expense reflects about 21 million ambulatory care visits and 3 million inpatient hospitalizations for people with OA and related disorders.
- Over half of adults with OA are of working age (18 to 64 years old). **One in 14 of these working adults has OA-related medical or pharmacy claims.**
  - **People with OA are more likely to fall, and 1/3 suffer from depression or anxiety** due to pain and disability from OA.
  - **Opioids and benzodiazepines are prescribed for 27% of people with OA**, despite the high risk of adverse side effects and drug addiction and a lack of evidence supporting this approach.
  - **Early intervention is critical as delays in diagnosis and care lead to worsening of disease**, recurrence of injury, more severe injury, time off at work, and further disability. Making evidence-based interventions widely available and accessible can be done at a relatively low cost with significant long-term savings.

## ACT NOW!

As a healthcare systems administrator, you can play a critical leadership role in expanding and supporting systems for diagnosis, referral, and delivery of effective interventions for patients with OA. Taking these actions can help effect healthcare system change. Look for opportunities to tailor offerings to meet your specific needs and to assure equity in access and delivery by using telehealth, mobile technology, and other virtual or remote innovations.

### 1 **Commit your organization to taking on the challenge of OA, and ensure that healthcare providers are up-to-date on the latest evidence-based treatment options, including pain management.**



#### [Experts in Arthritis – Updates on Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, and Juvenile Arthritis:](#)

A free public education seminar for people with arthritis and those who care about them, covering current scientific evidence and management strategies in the treatment and care of osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and juvenile arthritis.



#### [Overview of the American College of Rheumatology \(ACR\) Guidelines for the Treatment of Osteoarthritis:](#)

Pre-recorded webinar of Dr. Amanda Nelson, MD, MSCR, RhMSUS, presenting on the latest (2019) ACR guidelines for OA management.



#### [Exercise Prescription for OA & Weight Management – Continuing Medical Education \(CME\) for Primary Care, Rheumatology, and Obesity Medicine Providers:](#)

Course on strategies and resources to help patients with OA pursue physical activity safely and effectively, approved for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™.



[Resource library and toolkits for healthcare providers:](#) Pain-communication tools, outcome measures for use in clinical care and patient education, and a review of guidelines for the management of OA.

### 2 **Engage your organization’s healthcare team in a systematic process to bundle evidence-based OA interventions with other evidence-based health promotion programs** to provide more comprehensive and long-term approaches to managing related chronic conditions.



[Coupling Evidence-Based Interventions to Encourage Sustainability:](#) A webinar to identify barriers and facilitators to coupling evidence-based programs; opportunities for collaboration among community organizations, businesses, health systems, and others; and innovative strategies to enhance integration of such programs ([pdf of webinar summary and discussion transcript](#)).



[Osteoarthritis Community Intervention Programs, Recommendations, and Guidelines:](#) A toolkit with resources for community organizations to help implement arthritis lifestyle management programs, including Making the Case for Arthritis Programs.

- 3** **Allocate sufficient funding for printing patient education materials** and brochures, and for suggesting specific places in the community for physical activity, like parks, recreation centers, senior centers, and community centers.



[Tools for Patients, including a Resource Guide and printable 3x5 postcard](#): Printable handouts (postcard, prescription pad, etc.) for patients to help connect them to educational, self-management, and physical activity resources.



[CDC Lifestyle Management Programs for Arthritis](#): Resources for patients that describes self-management education (SME) and physical activity programs.



- 4** **Establish partnerships for referral to evidence-based, community-based, self-management education and physical activity programs**, including alternative, low-cost, flexible delivery options (e.g., online self-directed guides, low-tech phone contact, self-help program books, and tool kits). **Offer cross-referrals among programs** for continued support and to address other health conditions.



[CDC Workplace Health Promotion](#): Sound, actionable information, vetted by the CDC and experts, to help employers launch or expand a workplace health promotion program.



[Park Rx America](#): A non-profit organization providing interactive and educational tools and resources for healthcare providers and park and land managers to facilitate “Prescribing Nature” as a low cost intervention with a collective purpose to decrease the burden of chronic disease, increase health and happiness, and foster environmental stewardship.



[Exercise is Medicine®](#): A global health initiative managed by the American College of Sports Medicine, to support and promote inclusion of physical activity and referral to evidence-based physical activity programs and qualified exercise professionals in the management plans that healthcare providers create with their patients.