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FREESTANDING PAPER

TITLE: Patients' perceptions of osteoarthritis handling.

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Background:

Osteoarthritis is a very common pathology, concerning in France about ten million patients. It is a disabling disease leading to possible important changes in patients' life because of both pain and movement limitations. On GP's side, it is a very banal and mild pathology since it will not threaten life. EBM recommendations propose first non-pharmacological measures such as daily activity, weight reduction and physiotherapy. The first medication recommended is paracetamol. It appears that there could be a gap between patient's perception of his pathology and his everyday life impairment and the medical management.

Research question:

How do patients feel about their osteoarthritis treatment and its apparent simplicity?

Method:

Qualitative study. Patients with severe arthrosis leading to surgery have been excluded. Twenty Semi structured interviews have been conducted by four researchers - asking patients from Paris and its suburbs - which have been recorded, transcribed, coded and analysed.

Results:

Most of the patients had bad feelings about arthrosis: they considered it as a severe illness possibly leading to a wheelchair. They described a poor quality of life impaired by pain and movements limitation. They felt that GPs and the other specialists as well as their relatives did not understand and trust them. While doctors proposed walking and paracetamol, patients sought for help in non conventional medications and therapies.

Conclusions:

there is a misunderstanding between patients and doctors concerning arthrosis management; it seems to be a gap between patients' and doctors' representations of this very common pathology. The information given by the doctors and the disease management did not appear to be clear, understandable and acceptable by the patients.

Points for discussion:

-how improve patients information about osteoarthritis?