

Abstract

Feasibility of a physiotherapist-led behaviour change intervention to improve physical activity in people with rheumatoid arthritis

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Abstract

Introduction: Physical activity (PA) interventions incorporating behaviour change (BC) theory are needed to improve PA levels in people with rheumatoid arthritis. A pilot feasibility study of a Physiotherapist-led Intervention to Promote PA in Rheumatoid Arthritis (PIPPRA) was undertaken to obtain estimates for recruitment rate, participant retention and protocol adherence.

Methods: Participants were recruited at University Hospital (UH) rheumatology clinics and randomly assigned to control group (physical activity information leaflet) or intervention group (four BC physiotherapy sessions in 8 weeks). Inclusion criteria were diagnosis of RA (ACR/EULAR 2010 classification criteria), aged 18+ years and classified as insufficiently physically active. Ethical approval was obtained from the UH research ethics committee. Participants were assessed at baseline (T0), 8 weeks (T1) and 24 weeks (T2). Descriptive statistics and *t*-tests were used to analyse the data with SPSS v22.

Results: 320 participants were approached about the study with *n*=183 (57%) eligible to participate and *n*=58 (55%) consented to participate (recruitment rate: 6.4 per month; refusal rate 59%). Due to the impact of COVID-19 on the study, *n*=25 (43%) participants completed the study (*n*=11 (44%) intervention and *n*=14 (56%) control). Of the 25, *n*=23 (92%) were female, mean age was 60 years (s.d. 11.5). Intervention group participants completed 100% of BC sessions 1 and 2, 88% completed session 3 and 81% completed session 4.

Discussion: The intervention to promote physical activity was feasible and safe and provides a framework for larger intervention studies. Based on these findings, a fully powered trial is recommended.

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