

String of PEARLS

Practical Evidence About Real Life Situations

Patient self-management

PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Systematic Reviews for primary care practitioners—developed by Prof. Brian McAvoy for the Cochrane Primary Care Field (www.cochraneprimarycare.org), New Zealand Branch of the Australasian Cochrane Centre at the Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care, University of Auckland (www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa), funded by the Ministry of Health, and published in NZ Doctor (www.nzdoctor.co.nz).

Written information about medicines improves consumers' knowledge

Self-monitoring and self-management can improve quality of anticoagulant therapy

Stimulating involvement of older patients in their primary care may enhance their health

Lay-led self-management education programmes can be effective

Effectiveness of contracts for improving patient adherence not demonstrated

Strategies for enhancing medication adherence not very effective

Personalised risk communication may have a small effect on increasing uptake of screening tests

DISCLAIMER: PEARLS are for educational use only and are not meant to guide clinical activity, nor are they a clinical guideline.



Topical NSAIDs are probably effective for knee and hand osteoarthritis

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THE PROBLEM: Osteoarthritis is a pain for patients and health professionals. Some patients get relief from oral paracetamol while others do not. Some get benefit from oral non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), but prescribers get twitchy over the issues of gastrointestinal irritation and renal damage. The idea of low-dose NSAIDs is attractive and the topical formulation is one option. Oral piroxicam is now available in New Zealand but costs more than \$1 per pill (per day).

CLINICAL BOTTOM LINE: This review shows that topical NSAIDs are better than placebo for knee and hand osteoarthritis.

Treatments for osteoarthritis in knees and hands

	Success	Evidence	Harms
Topical NSAID vs placebo	Effective: For ≥50% pain relief over 8–12 weeks compared with placebo NNT = 6.4 for solution; NNT = 11 for gel formulation 8 and 27% get better as placebo response	Cochrane review ¹	No major harms Best evidence is for topical diclofenac

NNT = numbers needed to treat. An NNT of 6 means that for every 6 people given the treatment, 1 person will find the treatment effective.

Reference

1. Derry S, Moore RA, Rabbie R. Topical NSAIDs for chronic musculoskeletal pain in adults. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2012, Issue 9. Art. No.: CD007400. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007400.pub2.

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