Effectiveness of physical therapy, restricted to electrotherapy and exercise, for osteoarthritis of the knee

The Norwegian Knowledge Centre for the Health Services

Record Status
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Authors' objectives
The aim of this report was to evaluate the effectiveness of physical therapy, restricted to electrotherapy and exercise, for osteoarthritis of the knee. The clinical endpoints were pain, physical function, sickness days and quality of life.

Authors' conclusions
Both home based exercise and exercise led by a physical therapist improved pain, function and quality of life in patients with osteoarthritis of the knee. The exercise programs must last for a minimum of eight weeks to give significant effects.

Both laser and TENS gave significant effects on pain relief at the end of treatment (2-4 weeks). However, the evidence for the effects by laser is weaker than for TENS. There is a lack of evidence regarding effect on osteoarthritis of the knee after treatments including ultrasound and pulsed electromagnetic fields.

The effect of physiotherapy (exercise, laser and TENS) persist for 1-3 months after the end of treatment.

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