

A feasibility study for Walk with Ease UK – a community-based walking programme for adults with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions

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BACKGROUND

- Individuals with arthritis/musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions are less active than those without, yet physical activity (PA) is associated with physical and mental health benefits.
- Walking is a safe, easy, and inexpensive activity that is acceptable to those with arthritis/MSK.
- To date, no walking programmes designed for an arthritis/MSK population have been evaluated/researched in the UK.



WALK WITH EASE (WWE) PROGRAMME

- Walk with Ease (WWE) is a six-week community-based walking programme developed in the United States by the Arthritis Foundation.
 - Designed to effect behaviour change and promote self-efficacy via a participant guidebook.
 - Includes motivational strategies such as:
 - identifying barriers
 - setting action plans and goals
 - establishing rewards
 - identifying and proactively accessing social support and local resources
 - Offered in two formats, *instructor-led* and *self-directed*.
- WWE has demonstrated effectiveness – improving physical function and reducing arthritis-related symptoms of pain, stiffness and fatigue.

AIMS

This feasibility study of WWE has three overarching aims. To:

1. explore the relevance to a UK population;
2. test the feasibility of a randomised controlled trial to assess effectiveness and cost-effectiveness;
3. assess the experiences of programme participants and community partners.



METHODS

This 18-month study has main four phases, which are guided by the RE-AIM framework. An exploratory economic evaluation will also be conducted.

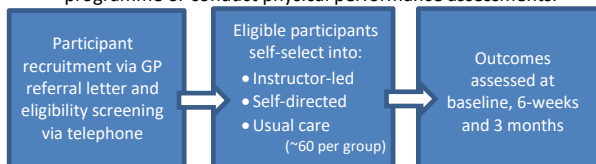


1: Development

- Cultural adaptation of the WWE guidebook to a UK population
- Production of a study-specific pamphlet of non-walking PA options in the community

2: Walk with Ease Programme

- Community volunteers will either lead the instructor-led format programme or conduct physical performance assessments.



3: Qualitative Component

- **Participant observation** using ethnographic techniques will be undertaken within a subset of instructor-led groups.
- **Biographical narratives** will be collected, describing the lived experiences of participants involved across the three study groups.
- **Semi-structured interviews** will be used to explore the views of community partners regarding the acceptability of WWE.



4: Future Study Planning

- Carry out exploratory work with other UK communities by conducting an online survey to determine suitability in being a future trial site.
- Explore implementation and integration processes, using quantitative and qualitative data to inform subsequent trial design.



DELIVERABLES

This study will:

- examine whether the WWE programme leads to improvement in physical function, pain and well-being, as well as sustained PA in a UK population;
- identify issues around recruitment, randomisation, retention, data collection, and adherence/compliance to the WWE programme;
- ascertain the types and availability of data necessary for a future full economic evaluation;
- describe the real-world process of arthritis/MSK patient referral into WWE and case management within an integrated health and social care system;
- uncover the barriers and enablers to successful integration and sustainability of WWE into the community as identified by participants and community partners.



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