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The experiences of those with ankle osteoarthritis and the impact on pain, physical functioning, mental wellbeing, and quality of life

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BACKGROUND

Osteoarthritis (OA) of the ankle joint is painful and disabling and is associated with life-long joint pain if not properly treated [1]. This may impact on an individual’s physical functioning and quality of life [2]. There is little research investigating the non-surgical management of ankle OA and the impact ankle OA has on a person’s physical and mental wellbeing.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study was:
To explore the experiences of people with OA ankle and the impact it has on pain, physical functioning, mental wellbeing, and quality of life (QoL).

Design: A qualitative study was carried out to explore the experiences of people with OA ankle.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with patients diagnosed with OA of the ankle.

Sample: Nine participants were recruited from an NHS orthopaedic clinic in North West England and from outside the NHS via snowball sampling. All participants had been diagnosed with OA of the ankle and had received conservative treatment or were awaiting surgical intervention for pain relief.

Data Analysis: Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was undertaken to identify emerging themes and concepts that surfaced across the transcripts of the participants.

RESULTS

Nine semi-structured interviews were undertaken.
8 males, 1 female - mean age 54 years (range 30-70 yrs)
7 had post-traumatic OA
2 had haemophilia related OA

Median duration of symptoms 2 years (range 1 – 20 yrs).

Four themes were identified:
1. Symptoms (Pain, Fear of pain, Swelling, Instability).
2. Impact on function, social activities and quality of life (QoL).
3. Impact on mental wellbeing.
4. Management and treatment

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This is the first study to explore the experiences of people with symptomatic OA ankle.

It was found that OA ankle results in severe pain, which has a substantial negative impact on a person’s physical and mental wellbeing.

The participants’ experienced a mixed response to the non-surgical management. It is likely that this is due to an absence of guidance on its treatment. Although there is a wide range of conservative interventions available, there is little evidence of their clinical effectiveness to inform the management of this condition. The findings of this study should be used to inform future research.

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REFERENCES