PROJECT INFORMATION

September 2020

Evaluating Different Ways to Help Patients Make Informed Choices about Surgery for Knee or Hip Osteoarthritis

Principal investigator

Karen Sepucha, PhD

Organization

Massachusetts General Hospital

What was the research about?

Osteoarthritis is a health problem that causes the cartilage in joints to wear away. People may have painful or stiff joints and find it hard to move. Some people choose joint replacement surgery to relieve pain and stiffness. But the surgery has risks, such as infection or nerve damage.

In this study, the research team compared two decision aids to help patients decide if they want surgery for knee or hip osteoarthritis. Decision aids help people choose between two or more healthcare options based on what's most important to them. One group of patients used a long decision aid with a 45-minute DVD and a 40-page booklet. The other group used a short decision aid with an interactive website and a 17-page pamphlet. The team also wanted to learn if sharing a report on a patient's preferences with their surgeon improved decision making.

What were the results?

The two decision aid groups didn't differ in the

- Rate of patients who reported making an informed decision about surgery
- Number of patients whose treatment matched their preferences
- Rate of patients who had surgery

Patients who received the short decision aid had more knowledge about different treatment options than patients who received the long decision aid.

Sharing the report with surgeons didn't improve decision making more than the decisions aids alone.

Who was in the study?

The study included 1,124 patients ages 21 and older who were considering surgery for knee or hip osteoarthritis. Of these patients, 91 percent were white and non-Hispanic; 11 percent were other races or ethnicities. The average age was 65, and 57 percent were women.

What did the research team do?

The research team assigned patients by chance to receive the short or long decision aid. Patients reviewed the aids before they visited their doctor to talk about surgery. The team also assigned patients' surgeons by chance to receive the patient preference report or not. The one-page report included patients' goals for the visit and their treatment preferences. It also had the impact of the condition on their daily life.

Patients completed three surveys during the study. One survey took place before the visit and the second survey took place one week after. The final survey was six months after the visit or six months after surgery if patients chose surgery.

Patients with knee or hip osteoarthritis, surgeons, and staff from health plans and health systems gave input on the study.

What were the limits of the study?

Only a small number of surgeons used the patient report, making it hard to study the effect of the report. Most patients in the study were white and non-Hispanic. Results may differ for patients of other races and ethnicities.

Future research could continue to look at the best ways to include patient preferences in decisions about surgery.

How can people use the results?

Surgeons can use the results when considering ways to help patients decide on surgery for knee or hip osteoarthritis.

To learn more about this project, visit www.pcori.org/Sepucha003.