

Exploring the care pathway of people with knee osteoarthritis in Switzerland

Céline Mötteli-Graf^{1,2,3}, MSc PT

¹ Zurich University of Applied Sciences, School of Health Sciences, Winterthur, Switzerland

² University of Zurich. Faculty of Medicine, Zurich, Switzerland

³ Swiss School of Public Health, Zurich, Switzerland

Background: Switzerland leads OECD countries in total knee arthroplasties (TKA) per 100,000 population. International variation in joint replacement is largely driven by economic factors rather than health needs, suggesting a potential evidence-performance gap in knee osteoarthritis (KOA) management. This gap is urgent to address, as knee implant use is expected to rise with aging, obesity, and economic growth. Although there are indications of inappropriate KOA management, such as underuse of conservative treatments and possible overuse of TKA, the actual patient care pathway and its alignment with guidelines remain unclear.

Aim: Therefore, the aim of this project is: a) to explore the care pathway of people with KOA during the course of the disease in Switzerland and compare it to the guideline recommendations, b) to bring relevant stakeholders together to address the possible evidence-performance gap, c) to formulate recommendations to address the evidence-performance gap in a policy brief, and d) to describe contextual factors in the implementation of clinical guidelines in Switzerland.

Methods: The doctoral thesis comprises four subprojects. Subproject 1 is a cross-sectional online survey of KOA patients to map their care pathway. Subproject 2 is a stakeholder dialogue, forming the basis for subproject 3's policy brief. Subproject 4 is a contextual analysis of barriers and facilitators influencing guideline implementation in Switzerland.

Discussion: Over- and underuse of healthcare services drive both cost inefficiency and quality loss in the Swiss system. This PhD project will investigate the evidence-performance gap in KOA management and develop scientific and policy arguments to address it