



Australian Association of Musculoskeletal Medicine

Media release

Tuesday 30 April 2019

Heed the evidence on vital knee pain therapy, doctors urge GP college

Sugar-based injections effective as a therapy for knee arthritis

The Australian Association of Musculoskeletal Medicine (AAMM) is urging the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) to include glucose-based injection therapy (prolotherapy) as a recommended treatment option in relieving pain for knee osteoarthritis.

Dr Michael Yelland, AAMM Vice President and an experienced General and Musculoskeletal Medicine Practitioner, commented:

“Unfortunately, in the second update of its *Guidelines for the management of knee and hip osteoarthritis*, published last July, the RACGP conditionally recommended *against* using prolotherapy in treating this painful condition on the grounds of insufficient evidence.

“The evidence it considered came from a randomised controlled trial showing prolotherapy injections to be superior to placebo saline injections at 24 and 52 weeks by a clinically important margin.⁽¹⁾

“However, the *Guidelines* committee did not consider additional evidence from a crossover randomised trial that showed prolotherapy injections plus exercises to be more effective than exercise therapy alone for knee arthritis.⁽²⁾ When the exercise group crossed over after 16 weeks to having prolotherapy injections as well, their pain and disability reduced significantly to the levels of those who started with prolotherapy.

“The *Guidelines* committee advised AAMM that its protocol does not consider trials that openly compare two active treatments, yet in AAMM’s view this is what General Practitioners and patients really want to know – is treatment A better or worse than treatment B? Will it give my patients lasting relief and is it safe?

“Over 7 million Australians suffer from a musculoskeletal disorder, including approximately 1.5 million Australians who suffer from osteoarthritic knee pain.

“Prolotherapy is an injection-based therapy that has been shown to increase strength in damaged ligaments, tendons and joints by making new connective tissue. It’s essentially a case of glucose (ie. sugar) being used as a safe and effective form of medical treatment.

“It has an important role in the treatment of the chronic pain of worn joints, ligaments and tendons which have not responded to other treatments. It strengthens the capsule and ligaments around the joint by the injection of a strong solution of glucose with some local anaesthetic directly into them several times, stimulating a healing reaction. When it is injected into the joint it may also promote the repair of cartilage.

“Once pain in the joint is relieved, exercise-based therapy can then be more effective. Importantly, prolotherapy not only reduces pain but it gets to the cause of it.

“Although many patients do respond, we acknowledge that, like other injection therapies such as cortisone and platelet-rich plasma injections, not everyone gets relief.

“While thousands of medical practitioners around the world are using prolotherapy, we are the first to agree that hard evidence must always be the essential element in determining whether a treatment approach is safe and effective.

“We think that, with the growing incidence of knee osteoarthritis in Australia, prolotherapy should be considered as a viable effective treatment option, particularly in those patients where other treatments have failed.”

See <https://aamm.org.au/treatment> for more information about prolotherapy.

Available for interview:

Dr Michael Yelland (AAMM Vice President) — available via Dr Damien Nevin

Dr Margaret Taylor (AAMM Committee Member) — available via Dr Damien Nevin

Dr Damien Nevin (AAMM spokesperson) — 0427 689 125

A high resolution photo of Dr Michael Yelland is available by clicking here:

<https://aamm.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/MJY-portrait-2015.jpg>

A photo of a knee affected by arthritis is available for media use here:

<https://aamm.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Proloknee.png>

References

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