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## **Cross-European Insights into Patient Understanding of Osteoarthritis: A Multi-National Survey**

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### **Background:**

An estimated 15% of adults over the age of 60 years have osteoarthritis (OA), with a higher prevalence among women. OA affects over 240 million people worldwide, posing significant socio-economic challenges. However, OA management remains inconsistent, especially across Europe where a range of health services, cultures, patient education levels and economic statuses exist. The extent of these differences is unknown, particularly with regard to current practices and patient perceptions in each country. It is hypothesized that significant disparities in patient knowledge about OA are likely influenced by regional differences in education and socio-economic factors. Previous studies, such as the Global Osteoarthritis Patient Perception Survey (GOAPPS) (1) and research by Kingsbury et al. (2), have explored patient perspectives on OA and its impact, focusing on a limited number of countries (5 countries and 6 countries, respectively). While these studies have provided valuable insights into patient experiences and the burden of OA, there remains a need for broader geographic coverage, particularly in relation to education and socio-economic differences. This necessitates a strategic approach to address this gap and the growing OA burden. In response, NetwOArk (European Network for OA) was established in 2021 to develop a European Society for OA, funded by COST European Cooperation in Science and Technology. People (patients, researchers, clinicians, and people from industry) from 37 European countries are members of NetwOArk.

### **Objectives:**

The primary objective is to understand the depth of knowledge about OA among individuals with the condition across Europe and identify intra-country variations. The secondary objective is to examine cross-country differences in OA treatment practices.

### **Methods:**

An online survey, developed by the members of NetwOArk, was distributed through key stakeholders, national patient advocacy groups, clinicians, and professional bodies across 19 countries, translated into 14 languages. The survey aimed to profile OA patients in each country, with a focus on patient perceptions and their understanding of OA. The survey consisted of four sections: (i) patient demographics (7 items), (ii) current symptomatology (7 items), (iii) knowledge of the condition (15 items), and (iv) quality indicators of care (16 items), including awareness of the condition and management strategies. Most questions were multiple choice or Likert scales to capture nuanced responses. The third section is based on validated questionnaires to measure OA knowledge among people with hip and knee OA: the HOAKS and the KOAKS (3). The fourth section is based on the validated questionnaire about quality indicators of care: OA QI (4). Different strategies were used to distribute the survey across the countries. Strategies included distributing through patient organisations, social media, and through healthcare professionals. The survey is open until March 2025 and a full statistical plan is under development. Descriptive preliminary demographic results will be presented.

### **Results:**

To date, a total of 613 responses have been collected from 19 countries. An overview of the demographics of the survey respondents has been provided in Table 1. Table 2 presents the number of survey respondents per

country. Among the 613 respondents, 76.8% were women, with a mean age of 63.85 +/- 11.88 years. Most respondents assessed their socioeconomic position as 'able to manage without difficulty or better'. The majority of the people reported good health literacy (>77%). Almost all respondents were diagnosed by a health care professional (91%). Activity-related pain was reported by 88.4% of participants. OA of the knee affected the majority of the respondents (64%), followed by hand OA (42%) and hip OA (40%). Nearly all respondents (99.8%) reported comorbidities, with hypertension being the most common (40%). Despite different strategies to spread the digital survey, completing an online survey remains challenging for some individuals in certain countries. Full results will be available in June and will be presented at the EULAR conference.

#### **Conclusion:**

We engaged 613 individuals with osteoarthritis from 20 countries, whose demographics align with known OA profiles. The reported prevalence of knee, hand, and hip OA among respondents corresponds with the existing literature. While differences in knowledge and treatment across countries have yet to be analyzed, the distribution of survey responses varied significantly between countries. In the coming months, additional efforts will focus on increasing participation in underrepresented countries. Looking ahead, these findings could inform the development of targeted educational campaigns in regions where knowledge levels are notably below average.

#### **References:**

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Table 1: Demographics of participants

Characteristics	%
Age (mean (sd))	63.85 (sd 11.88)
Gender	
Woman	76.8%
Man	23.0%
Trans	0.2%
Living environment (Rural)	33.9%
Socio economic position	
Very comfortable	9.3%
Quite comfortable	29.6%
Able to manage without much difficulty	32.5%
Have to be careful with money	20.2%
Find it a strain to get by from week to week	5.1%
Prefer not to answer	3.3%
Health literacy	
Help to read health information	77.3%
Understand written information about your condition	76.4%
Confident filling out forms	79.3%
Diagnosed with OA by healthcare professional (Yes)	91.0%
Activity related pain in joints (Yes)	88.4%
Morning stiffness	
Yes, > 30 minutes	35.3%
Yes, < 30 minutes	48.9%
No	15.8%
Joints affected:	
Knee(s)	64.3%
Hip(s)	40.3%
Hand(s)	42.3%
Back	33.3%
Neck	20.2%
Other joints	21.4%
Years since onset	
< 2 years	16.8%
2-5 years	25.3%
6-10 years	24.6%
> 10 years	33.3%
Joint replacement (Yes)	21.2%

Table 2: Number of participants per country

Country	Respondents (n (%))
Armenia	28 (1.3)
Austria	6 (0.9)
Belgium	31 (4.8)
Bulgaria	22 (3.4)
Cyprus	23 (3.5)
Denmark	1 (0.2)
France	20 (3.1)
Greece	2 (0.3)
Hungary	13 (2.0)
Ireland	93 (14.4)
Italy	100 (15.4)
Netherlands	128 (19.8)
Portugal	3 (0.5)
Romania	49 (7.6)
Serbia	1 (0.2)
Sweden	2 (0.3)
Switzerland	55 (8.5)
Turkey	55 (8.5)
UK	3 (0.5)
Unknown*	3 (0.5)

\* data cannot be interpreted (Land, Iteland, etc)

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