

# UNDERSTANDING PRESCRIPTION BEHAVIOR ACROSS HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IN TREATING KNEE OSTEOARTHRITIS BEFORE AND DURING THE 2020 COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Poster Number: 111

OARSI CONNECT 2021 VIRTUAL | APRIL 29 – MAY 1

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## BACKGROUND

- The main goal when treating knee osteoarthritis (OA) is to provide symptom relief, with a focus on easing joint pain and enabling mobility. This alleviates the distraction to daily activity.
- The COVID-19 pandemic affected healthcare systems globally and may have impacted the management of OA therapy for patients.

## OBJECTIVE

To determine how the management of knee OA patients was affected by restrictions associated with COVID-19 and how physicians adapted their prescribing to alleviate the impact to patients' therapy.

## METHOD: DATA SOURCE

- Data were collected from the Ipsos Osteoarthritis Therapy Monitor, a cross-sectional, online survey conducted between May - July 2019 & 2020.
- A sample of US physicians, including rheumatologists (rheums), orthopedic surgeons (orthos), primary care physicians with a focus in sports medicine (SM PCPs), and pain specialists, provided data on a sample of de-identified knee OA patients they personally manage.
- Participating physicians had been practicing in their specialty between 3-50 years and saw a minimum of 35 knee OA patients a month.
- Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the results.

## METHOD: MEASURES

- Demographics:** Patient caseload, stated usage of treatment class.
- Patient chart:** Current treatment, surgical therapy in patients' prior treatment.

## RESULTS

### Physician sample

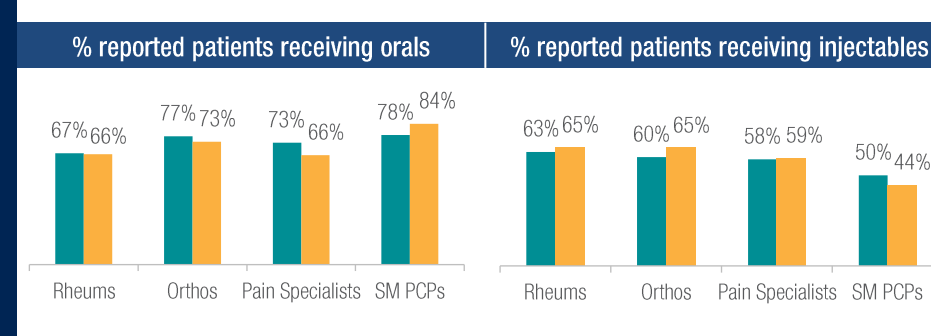
- For the May-Jul 2019 time-point, 275 physicians were sampled, reporting on 1,375 patients; From May-Jul 2020 260 physicians were recruited and collectively reported 1,300 patients (Table 1).

		Overall	Rheumatologists	Orthopedic Surgeons	Pain Specialists	SM PCPs
Physicians	Q2 2019	275	55	111	53	56
	Q2 2020	260	63	85	40	72
Patient charts	Q2 2019	1375	275	555	265	280
	Q2 2020	1300	315	425	200	360

### Current prescription medication in knee OA treatment

- Oral medications, particularly NSAIDs are widely prescribed regardless of physician specialty. A directional increase in the proportion of reported patients receiving oral NSAIDs deriving from sampled primary care SM PCPs from pre-COVID (Q219) to during COVID (Q220) (not statistically significantly different), whilst the same is not true for the other three secondary care sampled specialties (not statistically significantly different) (Fig 1).
- Focusing on injectable therapy, the opposite pattern is seen with higher proportions of reported patients deriving from sampled rheums, orthos and pain specialist's vs those deriving from sampled SM PCPs. For orthos specifically, the proportion of injectable treated patients deriving from them grew by 5 percentage points in Q220 (during COVID) vs Q219 (pre-COVID) – directionally more so than other specialties (not statistically significantly different). We opine that this is possibly due to limited elective surgeries during the pandemic (Fig 1).

Figure 1. Medication usage in reported knee OA patients across all sampled specialties – Q2 2019 vs Q2 2020



Source: Ipsos Osteoarthritis Therapy Monitor (May – Jul 2019, 275 physicians in US reporting on 1,375 knee OA patients (total); May – Jul 2020, 260 physicians in US reporting on 1,300 knee OA patients (total), data collected online. Participating physicians were primary treaters and saw a minimum number of patients per wave.) Data are © Ipsos 2021, all rights reserved.

### Focus on injectable usage in knee OA treatment

- Focusing on injectable usage amongst reported patients deriving from sampled rheums and orthos specifically, the proportion of the patients receiving this treatment formulation is relatively similar between both specialties, prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, among reported patients who received surgery (NB: ^ low sample size shown), a directionally higher proportion of patients reported by orthos receive injectables vs those reported by rheums – this is true both pre- and during the pandemic (NB: Not statistically significantly different) (Table 2)

Table 2. Injectable therapy usage among overall reported patients' vs received surgery patients, deriving from sampled rheums and orthos

	Overall patients		Patients who have received surgery	
	Rheumatologists	Orthopedic Surgeons	Rheumatologists	Orthopedic Surgeons
Q2 2019 (n)	63% (275)	60% (555)	59% (27^)	69% (80)
Q2 2020 (n)	65% (315)	65% (425)	-	33% (9^)

Source: Ipsos Osteoarthritis Therapy Monitor (May – Jul 2019, 275 physicians in US reporting on 1,375 knee OA patients (total); May – Jul 2020, 260 physicians in US reporting on 1,300 knee OA patients (total), data collected online. Participating physicians were primary treaters and saw a minimum number of patients per wave.) Data are © Ipsos 2021, all rights reserved.

## CONCLUSIONS

- From the sample surveyed, it appears SM PCPs adapted to COVID-19 restrictions by prescribing more oral therapy, while other secondary care physicians (rheums, orthos, pain specialists) increased their prescribing of injectable therapies - presumably to offer longer pain relief to their OA patients.
- With movement restrictions and limited elective surgeries during the pandemic, the lack of targeted treatment options for knee OA has been made more apparent. It is hopeful that knee OA treaters will be less reliant on symptom remedies and can readily offer patients longer-acting pain relief or disease modifying options to combat joint deterioration in the future.

## LIMITATIONS

The study was limited to the data collected. There may be other relevant physician/site variables which could contribute to the results seen.

## REFERENCES

- Ipsos Osteoarthritis Therapy Monitor (275 sampled physicians reporting on 1,375 knee OA patients in the US, May – Jul 2019)
- Ipsos Osteoarthritis Therapy Monitor (260 sampled physicians reporting on 1,300 knee OA patients in the US, May – Jul 2020)

## DISCLOSURES

Authors were employees of Ipsos at the time of submission. There are no conflicts of interest to declare for any of the listed authors.

Table 1 source: Ipsos Osteoarthritis Therapy Monitor (May – Jul 2019, 275 physicians in US reporting on 1,375 knee OA patients (total); May – Jul 2020, 260 physicians in US reporting on 1,300 knee OA patients (total), data collected online. Participating physicians were primary treaters and saw a minimum number of patients per wave.) Data are © Ipsos 2021, all rights reserved.

