



**Service Priorities and Programmes**  
**Electronic Presentations**

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**Introduction of early physiotherapy intervention for patients with uncomplicated musculoskeletal problems in primary care setting**

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**Introduction**

Musculoskeletal problems are very common in Hong Kong and patients frequently seek advice and treatment from primary care doctors and physiotherapists. General outpatient clinics encounter many of these patients every day and very often a referral for physiotherapy is warranted. With increasing demand for physiotherapy service, the waiting time usually takes a few months. In view of this, a comprehensive musculoskeletal education program being led by a physiotherapist has been introduced at the Nursing and Allied Health Clinic (NAHC) in Tsan Yuk Hospital since October 2012. This program specifically targets at three common musculoskeletal conditions that involve the shoulder, the back and the knee.

**Objectives**

The main objectives of this program are to educate patients on shoulder, back and knee problems, to provide them early physiotherapy intervention and to empower them to improve their conditions through home-based exercise.

**Methodology**

Patients presenting to the general outpatient clinics with shoulder, back or knee problems without a definite history of trauma or ligamentous damage are referred to the NAHC physiotherapy service. They will take part in one or two 90-minute musculoskeletal education program that includes physical examination, information and explanation regarding disease pathology, home management advice and home-based exercise demonstration with practice. A telephone follow-up is conducted one month later to enquire about the recovery progress. Individual physiotherapy intervention will be offered to those with persistent symptoms.

**Result**

972 patients were referred to the program between October 2012 and December 2013. 495 patients had knee problems, 274 had shoulder problems and 203 had back problems. The mean age was 59.6 years old and 60% were females. The average waiting time to join the program was about one month. Over 85% of patients attended the first session and 80% completed the one-month telephone follow-up. 81.6% of patients with shoulder problems, 74.8% of patients with knee problems and 71.6% of patients with back problems reported an improvement of their conditions with home-based exercise. There was only 5.7% of patients required secondary care after the program. Over 90% of patients were satisfied with the program and were willing to continue home-based exercise without further need for secondary care. This program suggested that early detection with early patient education and home-based exercise prescription were effective in the management of uncomplicated musculoskeletal problems in primary care setting.