

EPOSA FACT

Variability of pain and physical activity in older adults with osteoarthritis

Pain variability and physical activity

Pain is a key symptom of osteoarthritis (OA) and has been linked to physical inactivity. Pain fluctuates over time within individuals. Previous studies did not focus on day-to-day fluctuations of joint pain in relation to physical activity older persons with OA.

In EPOSA, we investigated the relationship of pain severity as well as within-person pain variability with physical activity in older adults with OA.



A 10-unit higher pain severity score was associated with 1% and 5% less physical activity in men and women, respectively.



A 1-unit higher pain variability score was associated with 18% more PA in men, and with 6% less PA in women.

Perspective

Our study showed that greater severity and less pain variability are associated with less PA in older adults with OA. These associations are different for men and women. The observed sex differences in the various associations should be studied in more detail and need replication in future studies. Ultimately, health care professionals could use the insights gained from such studies in clinical encounters to tailor recommendations for PA behavioural strategies.