

Implementing High Value Care in Europe

Network of independent caregivers

GLA:D

Context

Founded in 2013 by a research team from the University of Southern Denmark, Good Life with osteoArthritis in Denmark (GLA:D) is a non-profit organisation training and certifying physiotherapists to deliver neuromuscular exercise to patients with osteoarthritis. With more than 800 sites and 1,300 certified caregivers across five countries in 2019, the GLA:D initiative has helped 50,000 patients to maximise outcomes¹. GLA:D supports the application of exercise as first line treatment. It has built an outcome-based registry, enabling a learning community of caregivers around the design of non-invasive care pathways engaging patients and reducing unnecessary surgeries and imaging. For all these achievements, GLA:D won the VBHC Prize 2019².



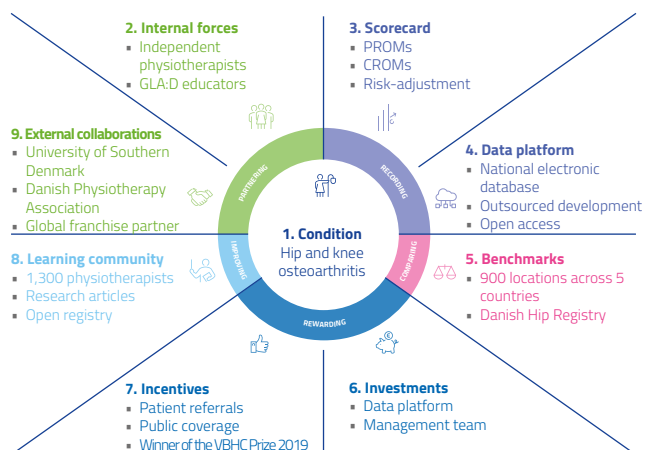
Achievements

Immediately after undergoing GLA:D training, patients' walking speed increases by 10%, while pain intensity decreases by 25%, on average. Only three months after programme start, knee patients reduce their intake of painkiller medications by 29%, on average. After one year, hip patients' quality of life improves by 20% and sick

leave for knee patients drops by 42%. With a fee of DKK 3,700 (€495) and costs for total knee or hip replacement of DKK 50,800 (€6,880), GLA:D generates value for patients and health systems by improving outcomes while reducing overmedicalisation.

Implementation

GLA:D was launched by academic entrepreneurs. "Over the years, sitting on different guideline committees and seeing lots of health care money being spent, I witnessed the stagnation of clinical practice, and I got increasingly frustrated", explains Professor Ewa Roos, co-founder of GLA:D. "Professor Søren Thorgaard Skou and I said, let's do it ourselves!" Based on close dialogue with referring general practitioners, orthopaedic surgeons, patients and the health care region of Southern Denmark, the GLA:D initiative illustrates a paradigm shift towards early, cost-effective treatment of a chronic disease. Notable elements of the HVC Implementation Matrix are presented on the right.





Scorecard

GLA:D is a standardised, but individualised, treatment plan consisting of two patient education sessions and 12 neuromuscular exercise therapy sessions supervised by a certified clinician. GLA:D's scorecard includes outcome data with condition-specific metrics and a risk-adjusted methodology. A national electronic database collects information such as patient symptoms (pain intensity), functional outcomes (walking speed), quality of life, and other indicators with economic impact such as consumption of painkiller medications and duration of sick leave.



Investments

In 2019, the founders invested in a management team consisting of a clinical specialist, a medical laboratory technician, a database manager and a manager of business development. With the support of the Danish physiotherapy association, GLA:D raised €150,000 and entered into a contract with a Danish IT-provider to build the GLA:D registry. As a non-profit initiative, GLA:D fees that are generated from a course offered to physiotherapists are reinvested in the maintenance of the registry. GLA:D has otherwise struggled to find investors willing to financially support their aim and the infrastructure necessary to accomplish it. Founders made an additional investment in the GLA:D brand. "The fact that GLA:D is still run out of a university gives credibility and therefore was an important asset when talking to clinicians," explains Professor Roos. However, GLA:D's success in delivering better outcomes has not yet materialised in an outcome-based payment. At present, most patients pay 60-100% of the treatment cost out of pocket, which limits patient access³.



Learning community

Data are published online enabling therapists to assess and benchmark their results against the GLA:D community on both national and international levels. GLA:D has created a franchise and expanded the brand to Canada, Australia, Switzerland and China. To deepen the learning experience, the team launched GLA:D back in 2018, a programme of nine courses more than 500 clinicians at the University of Southern Denmark. Beyond education, a series of scientific articles has been published describing the development of the concept and the initial findings⁴.



External collaborations

The rapid expansion of GLA:D requires the development of collaborations around the world. Through its franchise, GLA:D exported its methodology overseas and, as such, established the relationships necessary to build this global network of caregivers operating in different health systems, applying the same medical approach with replicable results. "GLA:D is spreading fast," declared Professor Eva Roos, cofounder of GLA:D. "Certified physiotherapists adapt rapidly. They are very motivated and feel a strong sense of ownership. This allows for relatively quick organic growth – especially when there is no governmental support." The decision to register as a trademark was the only way to ensure the high quality of care provided by the trained physiotherapists, since they are obliged to follow the principles of GLA:D and contribute data to the registry.

Highlights

GLA:D is an entrepreneurial non-profit initiative. The programme has become a trademarked protocol adopted by a global community of independent caregivers, benchmarking and improving through an outcome-based registry. This case illustrates the importance of both preventative and curative care for functional recovery after surgery. It further demonstrates the value of process guidelines, and the relevance of refining guidelines, using patient outcome data.

References:

1. GLA:D Annual Report 2018.
2. <http://vbhcprize.com/what-is-the-vbhcprize/>. (accessed on December 10, 2019).
3. Skou, S., Roos E., Good Life with osteoArthritis in Denmark (GLA:D): evidence- based education and supervised neuromuscular exercise delivered by certified physiotherapists
4. Kjaer, P., et al., GLA:D((R)) Back group-based patient education integrated with exercises to support self-management of back pain – development, theories and scientific evidence. BMC Musculoskelet Disord, 2018. 19(1): p. 418.