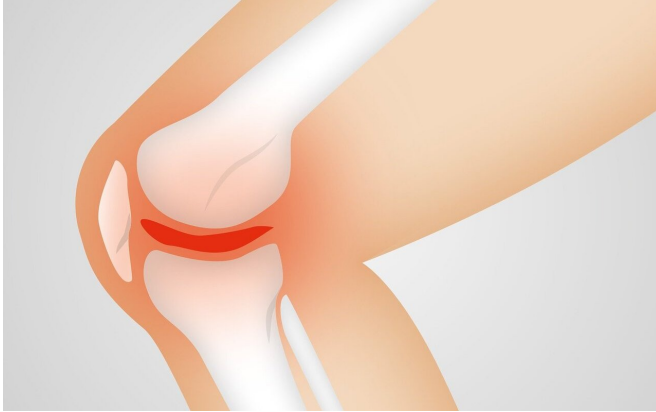


# Osteoarthritis program improving lives

25 May 2021



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Physiotherapy researchers led by La Trobe Associate Professor Christian Barton evaluated the effects of an education and exercise program on almost 2000 Australians with knee osteoarthritis.

The research, published in *Osteoarthritis and Cartilage Open* found that in the 12 months following their participation in GLA:D (Good Living with osteoArthritis from Denmark) in Australia:

- three-quarters of people reported clinically meaningful improvement in pain or quality of life
- three-quarters of people who initially desired [knee surgery](#) and did not have surgery, no longer desired it

Associate Professor Barton said osteoarthritis impairs the [quality of life](#) for 2.2 million Australians, more than half of whom are working age, at a cost of more than \$25 billion annually due to lost productivity and [health care costs](#) including joint replacements. Yet, programs which can reduce these costs are poorly funded.

"The main reason people in Australia with osteoarthritis don't receive the care they need is a lack of funding to support physiotherapists to

provide programs like GLA:D in public and private settings," Associate Professor Barton said.

"There are more than 115,000 joint replacement surgeries each year in Australia, with each costing between \$18,000 and \$30,000. Our peer-reviewed budget impact analysis indicates funding all Australians with osteoarthritis to access GLA:D would save at least \$300 million per year in surgeries alone. Put simply, surgery and pharmacology are well funded, and education and exercise support is not."

More than 1,700 physiotherapists have been trained to deliver the program, with La Trobe University supporting implementation and evaluation at 437 services across all states and territories.

**More information:** Christian J. Barton et al, Program evaluation of GLA:D® Australia: Physiotherapist training outcomes and effectiveness of implementation for people with knee osteoarthritis, *Osteoarthritis and Cartilage Open* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ocarto.2021.100175](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocarto.2021.100175)

Provided by La Trobe University

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