

# BePrOActive – Living with osteoarthritis

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## Introduction

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a long-term chronic disease, resulting in stiffness, pain and impaired movement. It is one of the ten most disabling diseases in developed countries and affects 18% of women and 10% of men over 60 years. The prevalence of OA is increasing due to population ageing and an increase in related factors such as obesity.

BePrOActive is an awareness campaign, looking to change the conversation around osteoarthritis in Ireland, by encouraging people living with the condition to take a proactive approach to the management of their OA. It sought to do this through the development of a suite of patient education resources and patient case studies.

Public health data reveals the scale of the challenge with three-quarters (72-75%) of the over-65 population in Ireland having overweight or obesity. A significant percentage of this cohort undertakes low levels of physical activity, with females being less active than males (65-74: F 43%; M 30%. 70+: F 61%; M 44%).

## Objectives

- Raise awareness and understanding about osteoarthritis, and the impact of the disease on people's quality of life.
- Change people's behaviour so that people currently living with OA understand the importance of exercise, weight loss and self-management.
- Shift attitudes that OA is inevitable or that there isn't anything that people can do about it.
- Raise awareness of Arthritis Ireland as a national patient organisation.

## Methods

One of the challenges in raising awareness about osteoarthritis is that it is necessary to address the myths and misperceptions that exist around the condition. To this end, we developed a

series of three educational videos with healthcare professionals to provide accessible, trustworthy and factual information about living with OA.



These took the form of a series of interviews with consultant rheumatologist, Dr Barry Sheane; chartered physiotherapist, Andrew Dunne; and registered dietitian, Richelle Flanagan. The interviews were professionally recorded and produced, and published on YouTube, the Arthritis Ireland website and social media channels.

In addition, we developed a suite of social media educational assets explaining the causes of OA, symptoms, how it's diagnosed, as well as information about living with OA. These were designed to achieve maximum reach and engagement across social media.

Patient case study videos are core elements of any awareness campaign. For this project, we wanted to develop two videos. The first will launch in November and features Ruth Mann (right), a former viola player with several orchestras in Ireland, who had to retire from her career at 53 due to her OA. The second short film we want to be with a farmer, as this can be a hard-to-reach community in terms of health promotion, and OA is a challenge for older farmers. Unfortunately, we have not been able to successfully recruit for this yet.

## Results

As BePrOActive is an awareness raising campaign, measurement primarily centred on digital metrics, such as reach and engagement of the videos and social media posts, visits to our website, etc. It was not within the remit of the campaign to assess for any behavioural change arising from this increased awareness.

To this end, the results of the campaign to date are very positive. Traffic to the OA page on our website has increased by 40% 2021 v 2020 YTD. The three video interviews with the HCPs have achieved 48,405 views on Facebook alone, with a further 3,113 views (organic) on YouTube. Campaign posts on Facebook have had 151,084 impressions. These are strong numbers for one of our campaigns.

A key point is that these assets will have value long after 2021.

## Conclusions

- Multimedia patient education resources are valuable means of engaging senior members.
- Patient organisations have a key role to play as trusted sources of information.
- Complements work of health services.
- Sustained, clear communication is vital.
- Development of digital content a value-add from pandemic.
- Challenges exist with hard-to-reach cohorts.

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## Further information

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