

Introduction

Proceedings of an International Workshop on Osteoarthritis Outcomes

On December 13–14, 2002, an International Workshop on Outcomes in Osteoarthritis was convened on the campus of the Indiana University School of Medicine, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA. The conference was structured as a series of lectures by internationally recognized experts in osteoarthritis (OA) outcomes. Some 130 individuals attended the meeting, including Indiana University faculty and house officers, other physicians from Indiana and surrounding states, and members of the pharmaceutical industry with an interest in health outcomes in OA.

The impetus for the conference was the designation by Indiana University of Kenneth Brandt, MD, as recipient of the Irwin Research Scholar award, the highest recognition conferred by the university upon faculty members who have demonstrated outstanding ongoing research. Brandt established the Rheumatology Division of the Indiana University School of Medicine in 1974 and served as Division Head for the next 29 years. His professional career has focused on basic research, clinical research, and health services research related to OA.

It was hoped that the meeting would facilitate discussion of OA outcomes among participants and members of the audience with a variety of backgrounds, stimulate research ideas, and highlight key questions that are unanswered today, relative to determinants of health outcomes in people with OA. For example, given that pathologic changes of OA are nearly ubiquitous among the elderly, why do only 20–30% of all those who demonstrate structural joint damage suffer from pain and disability? What is the difference between painful OA and asymptomatic OA? What are the roles of muscle weakness, anxiety, and depression as determinants of symptoms in OA? What is the best way to determine which individuals with OA will experience progression of joint damage and to differentiate them from those in whom the level of severity will change little over the ensuing years? What is the importance of exercise in OA, both as a risk factor and a treatment? What role do local mechanical factors, e.g., abnormal proprioception, ligamentous laxity, malalignment of the joint, play in the etiopathogenesis of OA?

The modest monetary gift provided by the award, augmented by matching funds from the Department of Medicine and a Conference Grant from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and educational gifts from industry, helped defray the cost of the meeting. The corporate sponsors were Abbott Laboratories; Amgen, Inc.; Aventis Pharma; Boehringer-Ingelheim; GlaxoSmithKline UK; McNeil Consumer Healthcare; Merck & Co., Inc.; NEGMA-Lerads; Novartis; Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceuticals; Pfizer; Pharmacia Corporation; Procter and Gamble; TAP Pharmaceutical Products, Inc.; and Wyeth-Ayerst.

The following pages provide a synopsis of the Conference proceedings.