

Audit: Do MRI knee requests from primary care, in patients over 50, meet local guidelines?

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Nice Guidelines 226: Osteoarthritis in over 16s: diagnosis and management

- OA should be diagnosed clinically over 45 (without any imaging)
- But imaging may be needed if diagnostic uncertainty and to plan surgery.

BNSSG Guidelines

- MRI not indicated if signs of OA (unless preserved joint space/ locking or specific question)
- MRI may be requested by GP with special interest in MSK, but must have a specific question
- Perform XR before MRI, if one not performed within 2 years
- Acute knee clinic (NBT) Fracture Clinic (BRI) or ED should be considered for acute injuries/red flags

Current waiting time for MRI knee is 6-8 weeks

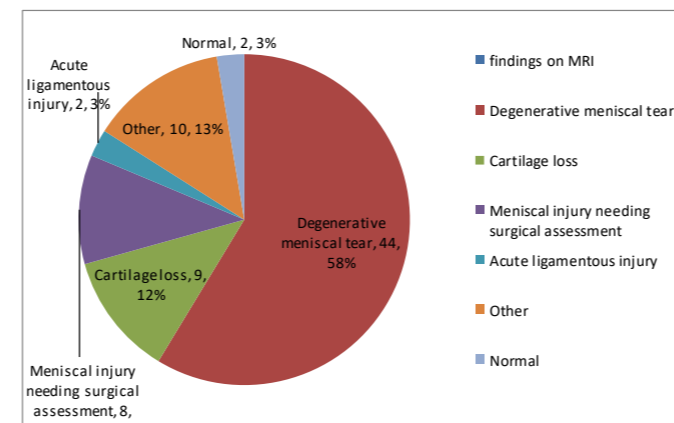
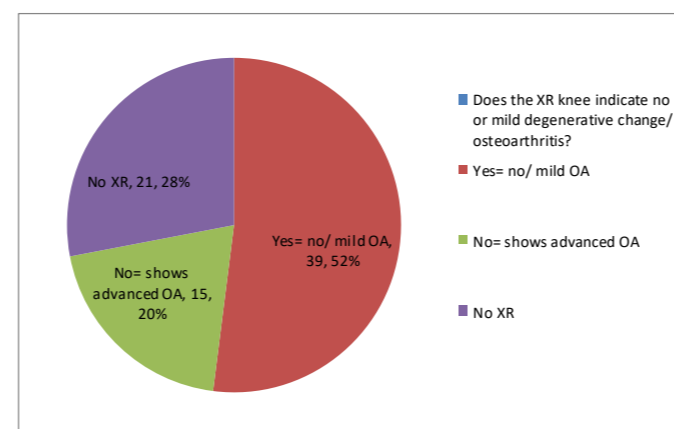
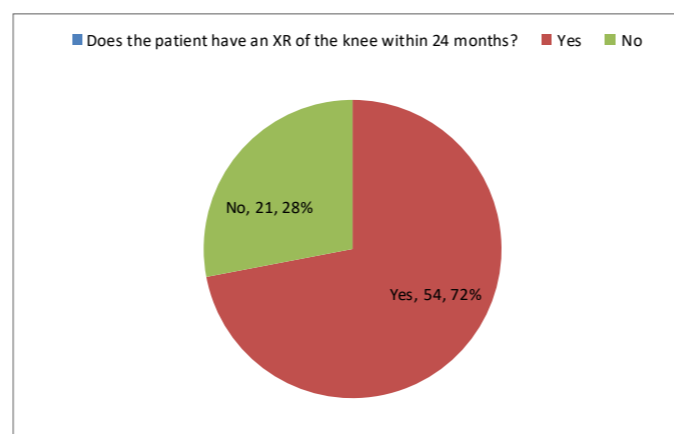
Method

- A sample size of 75 patients randomly selected from this date range between 28/9/22 and 28/3/23.
- The details of the MRI knee request and report reviewed against audit criteria.

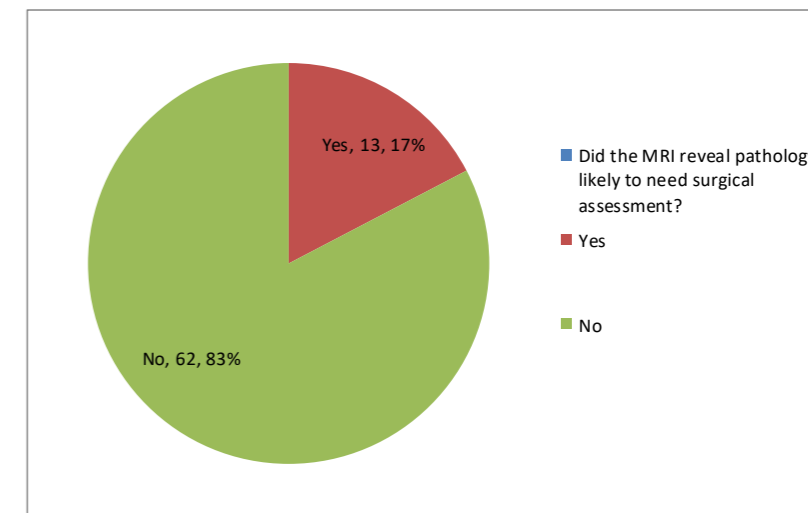
Total MRI knee in 6 months 28/9/22-28/3/23

Under 50	167
Over 50	116

1	Does the patient have an XR of the knee within last 24 months?	>=100.00%	72.00%
2	Does the XR knee indicate no or mild degenerative change/ osteoarthritis?	>=90.00%	52.00%
3	Is there a clear clinical question for which MRI is needed?	>=100.00%	72.00%
4	Is there a history indicative of pathology likely to need non joint replacement surgery (such as locking/ giving way suggestive of a meniscal tear or acute ligamentous injury?)	>=90.00%	44.00%
5	Did the MRI reveal pathology likely to need surgical assessment?	>=50.00%	17.00%



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Summary

- Large number of MRI's performed in over 50's
- Many without prior XR (28%)
- Most common finding: degenerative meniscal tear which is unlikely to need surgical assessment/treatment
- 6-8 week wait for MRI

Recommendations

- Clinically diagnose OA without imaging when appropriate (as per NG 226)
- XR is needed before MRI (unless specific reason)
- Acute injuries : ED or acute knee clinic/ fracture clinic (does not need imaging to refer).
- Requests sent without clear indication or prior XR are likely to be returned until XR performed.

References

1. Osteoarthritis in over 16s: diagnosis and management <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng226> accessed 28/4/23
2. Knee pain: <https://remedy.bnssg.icb.nhs.uk/adults/orthopaedics/knee->