

# Engaging Young People with Arthritis in Physical Activity: Harnessing the Power of a Social Media-Based Intervention

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Over the last ten years our team has been investigating the patterns of physical activity and related determinants among young people living with juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA). Based on our earlier findings, it was apparent that the intensity and frequency levels of physical activity for persons living with JIA were below those recommended by national guidelines and were consistently lower compared to peers without arthritis. Contextual barriers to engagement in regular physical activity included limited access to activities tailored to their specific needs; lack of knowledge about the long-term impact on their health; lack of social support; and out-of-pocket expenses for registration and travel for community-based activities. The benefits of taking part in an active lifestyle are numerous and well documented. However, for many living with JIA, opportunities remain limited and resources scarce. Considering this, our team decided to explore other means of delivering the knowledge and the support needed to promote physical activity among this group.

Preliminary acceptability data highlighted the pertinence of a social media-based intervention that is interactive, informative, accessible and esthetically appealing to help promote active behaviour. Encouraged to pursue the development of our proposed intervention, JIActiv, we turned our attention to testing its usability. With funding from the Canadian Initiative for Outcomes in Rheumatology cAre (CIORA), we conducted semi-structured interviews with young people living with JIA to garner information on their level of satisfaction with the proposed intervention, as well as its ease of use. We also interviewed rehabilitation professionals to explore the implementation of JIActiv in clinical settings.

For young people, we learned that participating in a social media-based intervention like JIActiv was influenced by the quality of the content, user-friendly navigation, appealing visual design, a well-structured intervention, as well as peer interactions and the chance to learn through group-based activities. The quality and the credibility of the information was essential to program adherence. Social support and guidance from peers, family members and health care professionals were important motivators to participation. Using a preferred social media site, in this case Instagram, facilitated user performance, as features were known to participants.

For rehabilitation professionals, JIActiv was compatible with clinical treatment goals aimed at promoting and empowering young people with JIA and might be of aid during the transition from pediatric to adult care. Furthermore, the interactive nature and accessibility of the intervention were appealing to professionals, as they recognised the potential impact on health outcomes. Nonetheless, successful implementation of such an intervention is dependent on institutional resources (time and material), as well as professionals' workload and ease with digital resources.

Social media-based interventions, such as JIActiv, may offer supplementary resources to complement clinical care provision, as well as new avenues for delivering knowledge and support to promote health in JIA.

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