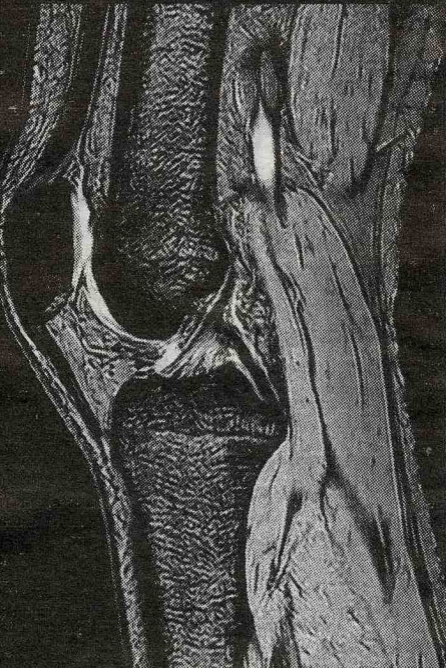


Health matters



Cheltenham Imaging Centre

Harminder S Gosal, Consultant Orthopaedic and Knee Surgeon from Cheltenham Knee Unit, at Linton House, discusses Knee Arthritis

THE knee joint is commonly affected by two types of arthritis; osteoarthritis (OA) or rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

OSTEOARTHRITIS

OA is the most common type affecting the knee joint, caused by 'general wear and tear'. Main symptoms are of pain, swelling, stiffness and loss of mobility. Symptom progression can lead to night pain and sleep disturbance. There may be a history of long-standing knee injury.

Weight reduction, gentle low impact exercise to strengthen quadriceps muscles, use of a walking stick, and pain killers such as paracetamol can help reduce OA pain. If symptoms persist or deteriorate then a consultation with your GP is recommended who may prescribe other forms of pain relief and organise some physiotherapy.

If these measures do not improve symptoms then your GP may organise an X-ray and referral to a surgeon. Here, treatment may include knee injections of steroid (Cortisone) or a type of hyaluronic acid injection which acts as a 'lubricant' in the joint. Drugs such as Glucosamine and Chondroitin have also been reported to show variable benefit. In some cases of OA knee braces will help, particularly 'off loader' braces, in others surgical arthroscopy may relieve symptoms. If pain is so severe sleep is disturbed, joint replacement may be an option.

The knee is the most commonly replaced joint in the UK. There are different types of joint replacements, depending on the part and the extent of the joint affected. Partial joint replacement is also possible. Long-term results are very good in correctly-selected patients and should last between 10 to 15 years before wearing out and requiring a revision procedure. Revision has improved significantly leading to excellent results. There are some risks and complications associated with joint replacement.

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Rheumatoid Arthritis can affect many joints. Management is mainly by medication in the earlier stages of the disease process. There are many types of drugs used to treat RA, prescribed by GPs and Rheumatologists.

Once the symptoms cannot be managed by medications then joint replacement is an excellent option for symptomatic relief.

■ For details call 01242 535908, visit www.cheltenhamkneeunit.co.uk or pop into Linton House Clinic, Thirlestaine Road, Cheltenham

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