

# Education programme promotes self-managed walking for patients with peripheral arterial disease

Researchers from York, Stirling and Sheffield Universities worked with clinicians from Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to develop an education programme for patients with intermittent claudication – a painful condition caused by narrowing or blockage of the main blood vessels supplying the legs. The programme supports patients to manage their symptoms and improve their quality of life.

*“The SEDRIC programme was shown to increase patients’ walking capacity and their quality of life after six weeks. Our pilot scheme suggests that a structured education programme could make a real difference to the lives of people with intermittent claudication.”*

**Dr Garry Tew**, Research Fellow, The University of York



## Supporting patients to manage a painful condition

Intermittent claudication is a painful symptom of peripheral arterial disease (PAD), which occurs when blood flow to the leg is reduced as a result of the hardening and narrowing of the arteries. It can cause severe discomfort and leg cramps when walking. The best ways to treat the symptoms of claudication include stopping smoking and taking more exercise.

The NICE guideline on diagnosis and management of lower limb PAD recommends that patients are given both oral and written information about their condition including what causes it, what risk factors they can control, and what treatment options are available.

Based on this recommendation, researchers and clinicians from York, Stirling and Sheffield worked with 32 patients to design an educational workshop called Structured Education for Rehabilitation in Intermittent Claudication (SEDRIC).

The SEDRIC programme focused on the importance of self-managed walking to control symptoms, and was piloted among patients from Sheffield’s Northern General Hospital.

## Designing a group-based education workshop

The three-hour SEDRIC workshop is split into three sections:

### 1 The patient story

Giving patients the opportunity to share their thoughts and ask questions about their condition, including diagnosis, symptoms, causes, consequences, and treatments.

### 2 The professional story

A trained educator delivers key information about intermittent claudication to the patients, as recommended by NICE. Topics covered include causes of pain, potential complications and risk factors.

### 3 Walking

The main section of the workshop focuses on promoting the benefits of walking as a means of managing and reducing symptoms. The educators talk to patients about the importance of regular walking exercise, goal setting, action planning and self-monitoring. Patients are also shown how to use a pedometer to keep track of their daily step counts.

Two weeks after the workshop, all patients receive a personal call to review their progress and discuss any barriers they are facing in changing their exercise habits.

## Pilot scheme shows workshop is a success

The researchers recruited 23 patients from Sheffield to take part in a pilot trial of the SEDRIC programme in 2013/14. Fourteen patients were randomly allocated to take part in the workshop, and 9 patients were allocated to a control group.

Six weeks after attending the workshop, patients showed on average a 45 metre increase in 6 minute walking capacity compared to the control group. Those who attended the workshop also reported an improvement in disease-specific quality of life and showed higher scores for speed and distance using a standard Walking Impairment Questionnaire.

Dr Garry Tew, Research Fellow at the University of York said: “Our initial small-scale trial of the SEDRIC education programme showed that it was a success with patients able to walk further, and for longer, only a few weeks after having completed the course. We are now applying for funding to run a much bigger study across 10 NHS Trusts and involving 360 patients.”

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