

My Story

Enabling self-management and coping of arthritic pain

Arlene Rowe used to suffer from terrible pain because of her Osteoarthritis (OA), and found her life becoming more and more restrictive. Here, she explains the transformative impact that group physiotherapy programme, ESCAPE-pain, has had on her physical and mental wellbeing.

“I first went to visit my doctor because I was having severe problems with my knees, hip and arm. I was in tremendous pain - I couldn’t use my left arm fully, and I started walking in a rather odd way. My house has three storeys, with 38 steps, so getting up and down them was becoming a serious problem. I found that life was becoming quite restrictive, which I was sad about, because I’ve always been a very active person. I found it difficult to get on trains, and I wasn’t sleeping because of the pain.

“I was told I should consider having an operation... which I really didn’t want”

“I was referred to another doctor who gave me steroid injections. She suggested that physiotherapy and perhaps hydrotherapy would help, but that I should consider having an operation on my hip and knees - which I really didn’t want to do. So, I went back to my doctor and he referred me to a physiotherapy specialist. It was this physiotherapist who suggested that I might be a suitable candidate for the ESCAPE-pain programme.

“When I started the programme, I really couldn’t see how the pain in my limbs was going to go. But I’d learned from my husband’s experience that physiotherapy can do a lot for people, and I would have tried anything.

“My life has changed massively... I’m not afraid to go out, to cross the road”

“Since being on the ESCAPE-pain programme, my life has changed massively. My first goal was just to stand straight. Now, I’m not hunched over, and I’m beginning to walk properly. I’m still stiff, I’ve still got arthritis, but what I don’t have is the pain. Occasionally I get twinges, but nothing that makes me miserable. Being able to sleep at night is wonderful. I’m not afraid to go out, I’m not afraid to cross the road, I can get on and off the bus okay, and I can get on the train.

“I’m determined to continue with the exercises. I long to have a bath - to be able to get into the bath! To walk faster - although I walk much more quickly than I did. It would be nice to be consistent in the way I move, and to move correctly. It just makes an incredible

difference to your life; to not think ‘ouch’ every time you do anything, or to avoid trying new things, or to worry that you won’t be able to get onto the pavement safely when crossing the road.

“I feel better mentally, as well as physically”

“Were it not for ESCAPE-pain, I think I would have to have a walker, which obviously restricts what you can do. Previously, the pain stopped me from sleeping and moving any faster than at snail pace. Now I can sleep, I can think clearly. So, I feel better mentally, as well as physically.”



ESCAPE-pain - or Enabling Self-management and Coping of Arthritic Pain - is a six-week group programme delivered to people aged 45 plus with OA.

- OA affects nearly ten million people, and accounts for two million GP consultations.
- ESCAPE-pain has been shown to reduce pain, improve physical function, depression, health beliefs and general wellbeing in a randomised control trial (RCT).
- Users benefit from sustained benefits for up to two and a half years after completing the programme.

For more information email hello@escape-pain.org or visit www.escape-pain.org