ABSTRACT

Purpose: In knee osteoarthritis (OA), the opportunity for non-surgical intervention is reduced due to time lost between symptom onset and diagnosis. This study was conducted to understand, from the perspective of various stakeholders, the reasons for delay and useful strategies to enhance early awareness of knee OA. Methods: Qualitative study using focus groups, one with health professionals, the other with community-dwelling individuals (n=13). Question domains included: knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about OA; experiences with people with OA; health care seeking behavior, access to services; and, suggested strategies to enhance public awareness. Qualitative analyses identified dominant themes. Results: Reasons for delay from the layperson perspective included: lack of knowledge about risk factors and prevention, and a prominent belief that knee pain is expected with age. Reasons related to the health care system included: long wait times and frustration getting appointments. Health professionals indicated it is unclear which discipline should discuss prevention and risk factors. Suggested strategies included: advocating a healthy lifestyle, developing prevention programs and use of celebrities to inform the public.

Conclusions: Multiple reasons for delays as well as strategies to counter them were identified. Lack of guidelines to determine which discipline should provide information on disease control was also identified. These results have informed the design and content of the next phase – a survey of the general public to better understand gaps in knowledge about risks and symptoms of OA along with early management.