



Empathica: improving health outcomes by enhancing empathy

Drs [Hazel Everitt](#), [Felicity Bishop](#), [Leanne Morrison](#) and Professors [Paul Little](#) and [Lucy Yardley](#) (Department of [Primary Care](#) and Population Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, and School of Psychology) are launching a new [NIHR School of Primary Care](#) funded multidisciplinary project with collaborators from [Oxford](#) and [Keele](#) to investigate whether a doctor's empathy can reduce pain in osteoarthritis.

Osteoarthritis pain is common, costly and challenging to manage in primary care. Numerous drugs and non-drug treatments are recommended, but people still experience pain and drug side-effects. Excellent communication between patient and GP during an appointment can reduce pain and improve quality of life and satisfaction.



The two year project aims to build on previous research that found that training practitioners to use empathy and encourage optimism about treatment improves health outcomes, such as reduced pain. The team aim to develop a web app that provides brief online training to GPs, physiotherapists and nurses to help improve the management of osteoarthritic pain.

*"This is an exciting opportunity to improve patients' wellbeing without changing their treatment," said **Dr Felicity Bishop**. "A short online training session for GPs could potentially improve the lives of hundreds of people living with pain."*

If successful, the team hope the web app they develop can help train practitioners to add more empathy into their consultations. This could improve the effectiveness of treatment for many painful conditions, reducing pain and improving quality of life.

https://www.southampton.ac.uk/medicine/academic_units/projects/empathica.page

