

SARAH trial (Strengthening and stretching for Rheumatoid Arthritis of the Hand)

- Results -

You may recall that between October 2009 and May 2011 you took part in the SARAH Trial.

During this study we aimed to contact 480 people who had problems with their hands and wrists as a result of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA). We actually contacted 490 people who were chosen to have either usual care (between 1 and 3 sessions of advice with a hand therapist) or the SARAH exercise programme (6 sessions of supervised exercises with a hand therapist). We are pleased to inform you that this trial was able to reach valuable conclusions about these different treatments.

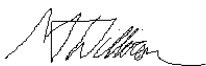
From the information collected we were able to see the long term benefits of both treatments for people with RA. With treatment for any condition, some people will get better, some will stay the same, and some get worse. In research we look at how people get on overall, or on average, and it is these overall results that we report on.

Both treatments showed that on average patients got better from the start of the study but these improvements were of differing amounts. **Overall, the SARAH exercise programme showed about twice as much improvement in hand function as usual care on its own and improvements stayed about the same over the 12 months of the study.** On the 12 month questionnaire 43% of the patients receiving the SARAH exercise programme and 20% of patients receiving usual care reported some or much improvement. The study also showed that the SARAH exercise programme was cost effective and could be delivered by existing NHS staff with relative ease.

You may recall receiving a further questionnaire recently which will help to provide more useful information on whether the SARAH exercise programme helps patients over a longer time period. We are in the process of checking to see if the benefit of the SARAH exercise programme carries on after 12 months. If you have an uncompleted questionnaire at home it is not too late to complete and send it to us.

We are currently looking at ways that we can train health professionals to deliver the SARAH exercise programme around the country.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you very much for taking part in the study.



Dr Mark Williams

SARAH Trial lead

On behalf of the SARAH trial team



**National Institute for
Health Research**

ISRCTN 89936343