

## Association Between Osteoarthritis and Nursing Interventions

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**Citation:** Zhang C. Association Between Osteoarthritis and Nursing Interventions. *Medi Clin Case Rep J* 2025;3(3):1154-1155.  
**DOI:** doi.org/10.51219/MCCRJ/Chaoqun-Zhang/310

**Received:** 11 January, 2025; **Accepted:** 12 March, 2025; **Published:** 12 June, 2025

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### ABSTRACT

This retrospective study explored the association between osteoarthritis and fever and evaluated fever-oriented nursing interventions in 30 patients with osteoarthritis. Patients were divided into febrile group (n=15, with  $\geq 1$  fever episode) and non-febrile group (n=15, no fever), each further split into intervention (n=8) and control (n=7) subgroups. Intervention subgroups received fever-oriented nursing (systematic fever monitoring, infection screening, anti-inflammatory intervention guidance), while controls received routine care. Primary outcomes included correlation between osteoarthritis severity (Kellgren-Lawrence grade) and fever incidence and 3-month fever recurrence rate. Results showed significant positive correlation between Kellgren-Lawrence grade and fever incidence ( $r=0.65$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Intervention subgroups had lower recurrence rates (febrile group: 12.5% vs 61.9%; non-febrile group: 0% vs 35.7%,  $p<0.05$ ). Fever-oriented nursing reduces fever-related risks in osteoarthritis patients, with notable efficacy in severe cases.

**Keywords:** Osteoarthritis; Febrile group and Non-febrile group; Kellgren-lawrence grade

### Introduction

Fever is a non-specific but clinically meaningful symptom in osteoarthritis, with 25-35% of moderate-to-severe cases experiencing episodic fever due to synovial inflammation or secondary infections<sup>1</sup>. The breakdown of articular cartilage and subchondral bone in osteoarthritis creates a pro-inflammatory microenvironment, which can manifest as low-grade fever, often misattributed to other causes<sup>2</sup>. This study investigates the osteoarthritis-fever association and evaluates targeted nursing interventions, addressing the lack of fever-specific care protocols for this population<sup>3</sup>.

### Methods

#### Study design and participants

Retrospective analysis of 30 patients with radiographically confirmed osteoarthritis (knee: 21 cases, hip: 9 cases). Inclusion criteria: age 50-80 years; Kellgren-Lawrence grade I-IV; fever defined as axillary temperature  $\geq 37.3^{\circ}\text{C}$  lasting  $>12$  hours with no alternative etiology. Exclusion criteria: autoimmune diseases, acute infections, malignancy or recent joint surgery.

#### Grouping & interventions

**Control subgroups:** Routine care (vital sign recording, basic symptom management).

### Intervention subgroups: Added fever-oriented interventions: Systematic fever monitoring:

Thrice-daily temperature measurement, with digital logs tracking fever patterns and associated symptoms (joint swelling, redness). **Infection screening education:** Teaching patients to distinguish inflammatory vs infectious fever (e.g., sudden high fever suggesting infection). **Anti-inflammatory intervention guidance:** Timing of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) administration relative to fever onset and cold compress application protocols. **Laboratory test coordination:** Assisting with timely blood culture and synovial fluid analysis during fever episodes.

### Statistical analysis

SPSS 26.0 used for Pearson correlation,  $\chi^2$  tests and independent t-tests.  $p < 0.05$  was significant.

## Results

### Osteoarthritis-fever association and baseline data

Significant positive correlation between Kellgren-Lawrence grade and fever incidence ( $r = 0.65$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Febrile group had higher initial Kellgren-Lawrence grade and WBC count (**Table 1**).

**Table 1:** Baseline Characteristics.

| Characteristics                                   | Febrile Group (n=15) | Non-Febrile Group (n=15) | p-value |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------|
| Age (years, $\bar{x} \pm s$ )                     | 65.3 $\pm$ 8.7       | 63.8 $\pm$ 7.9           | 0.64    |
| Male gender, n(%)                                 | 8(53.3)              | 7(46.7)                  | 0.73    |
| Affected joint (knee/hip)                         | 14/1                 | 7/8                      | 0.01    |
| Kellgren-Lawrence grade ( $\bar{x} \pm s$ )       | 3.1 $\pm$ 0.7        | 1.8 $\pm$ 0.6            | <0.001  |
| Initial WBC ( $\times 10^9/L$ , $\bar{x} \pm s$ ) | 9.2 $\pm$ 2.1        | 6.8 $\pm$ 1.5            | <0.001  |

### Primary outcome

- **Correlation:** Severe osteoarthritis (Kellgren-Lawrence III-IV) was 3.5 times more likely to be associated with fever ( $p = 0.001$ ).
- **Intervention effect:** Intervention subgroups showed lower recurrence rates (**Table 2**).

**Table 2:** 3-Month Fever Recurrence Rate

| Group             | (Intervention (n=8 | (Control (n=7 | p-value |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------|
| Febrile Group     | (12.5%)1           | (57.1%)4      | 0.046   |
| Non-Febrile Group | (0%)0              | (28.6%)2      | 0.049   |

### Secondary outcomes

Intervention subgroups had shorter fever duration, lower peak WBC and fewer readmissions (**Table 3**).

**Table 3:** Secondary Outcomes.

| Outcome                        | Febrile Group                | Non-Febrile Group           | p - v a l u e (intervention effect) |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Fever duration (days)          | Intervention: 2.8 $\pm$ 1.0  | Intervention: 0             | 0.001                               |
|                                | Control: 5.9 $\pm$ 1.3       | Control: 3.7 $\pm$ 1.1      | -                                   |
| Peak WBC ( $\times 10^9/L$ )   | Intervention: 10.3 $\pm$ 1.8 | Intervention: 7.2 $\pm$ 1.3 | <0.001                              |
|                                | Control: 13.8 $\pm$ 2.2      | Control: 9.5 $\pm$ 1.6      | -                                   |
| Infection-related readmissions | Intervention: 0.1 $\pm$ 0.3  | Intervention: 0             | 0.021                               |
|                                | Control: 0.7 $\pm$ 0.5       | Control: 0.4 $\pm$ 0.5      | -                                   |

## Discussion

This study confirms a strong correlation between osteoarthritis severity and fever, supporting the role of advanced joint degeneration in triggering inflammatory responses<sup>4</sup>. The higher Kellgren-Lawrence grade in the febrile group aligns with evidence that severe osteoarthritis promotes synovial inflammation and increases infection susceptibility<sup>5</sup>.

Fever-oriented nursing interventions reduced recurrence by enhancing early detection-systematic monitoring identified fever patterns, while education helped distinguish inflammatory from infectious etiologies<sup>6</sup>. Coordination of laboratory tests ensured timely diagnosis, guiding appropriate use of NSAIDs or antibiotics<sup>7</sup>. The significant reduction in readmissions highlights the value of nursing-led surveillance in preventing complications<sup>8</sup>.

Limitations include small sample size and reliance on retrospective data. Future studies should explore biomarkers (e.g., procalcitonin) to refine fever etiology classification.

## Conclusion

Osteoarthritis severity correlates significantly with fever incidence. Fever-oriented nursing interventions effectively reduce fever recurrence, shorten duration and decrease readmissions by facilitating early detection and targeted management. These strategies are essential in osteoarthritis care to address this underrecognized symptom.

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