

Policy for the use of Image Guided Therapeutic Intra-Articular Joint Injections

Category: Restricted

What are image guided therapeutic intra-articular joint injections?

Image guided therapeutic intra-articular joint injections are anaesthetic and steroid based injections (corticosteroid injections) used to relieve severe joint pain and inflammation caused by Osteoarthritis. They are injected into joints using guided images from either an x-ray (fluoroscopy) or an ultrasound to identify the correct path to place the needle.

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis and classed as a chronic musculoskeletal disorder. Knees, hips, feet and small hand joints are the common areas affected by osteoarthritis where joints are unable to repair themselves. However, it can affect most joints and cause severe pain and inflammation resulting in reduced mobility and quality of life.

Treatment

Image guided intra-articular corticosteroid injections are used when other forms of treatment such as physiotherapy, painkillers or lifestyle changes that have not worked well.

Corticosteroid injections

The corticosteroid injection includes an anaesthetic to provide quick pain relief and steroid 'cortisone' provides longer inflammatory relief to ease pain and swelling.

Hyaluronan injections

Due to lack of evidence lubricating injections of hyaluronic acid are not used for the management of osteoarthritis.

Risks

Risks include post-injection pain, formation of crystals into joint fluid (crystal synovitis), bleeding into joint (haemarthrosis), severe infection of joint (joint sepsis), tissue death (necrosis), degeneration of the articular cartilage (atrophy), fluid retention and hypertension or diabetes may be made worse by the injection.

Eligibility Criteria

The patient's local NHS commissioning organisation (CCG), who is responsible for buying healthcare services on behalf of the population, does not routinely fund the use of image

guidance for therapeutic joint injections. The patient may access a palpated joint injection as deemed appropriate by his / her clinician.

This means the patient's NHS commissioning organisation (CCG), who is responsible for buying healthcare services on behalf of patients, will **only** fund the treatment if an Individual Funding Request (IFR) application has shown exceptional clinical need and the CCG supports this.

Advice and further guidance

For more information, search 'steroid injections' or 'osteoarthritis' at www.nhs.uk

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