



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

HIP AND KNEE OSTEOARTHRITIS



E-mail: gladireland@ul.ie
Website: www.gladireland.ie

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the GLA:D® Ireland Annual Report for 2025! The GLA:D® Ireland non-profit initiative was set up in 2021 to improve outcomes for people with hip and knee osteoarthritis in Ireland, with involvement of those with lived experience and clinicians treating these conditions.

GLA:D® aims to accelerate implementation of clinical guidelines into practice, with an overall objective to ensure that: **1.** All people with osteoarthritis have equal access to evidence-based treatment irrespective of place of residence or financial situation; and **2.** Surgery is considered only when non-surgical treatment measures have not led to satisfactory outcomes

GLA:D IRELAND TEAM



Clodagh Toomey PhD

Research Lead GLA:D Ireland
Primary Investigator IMPACT Project



Avantika Bhardwaj PhD

Post-Doctoral Researcher



Peter Hempenstall

PhD Student & GLA:D Ireland
Research Assistant

HOW DID GLA:D® IRELAND GET STARTED?

The GLA:D® Ireland initiative came to fruition through a **Health Research Board** Emerging Investigator Award to fund the **IMPACT (Implementation of osteoarthritis clinical guidelines together) project**. The co-applicant team and steering committee are made up of a diverse group of stakeholders and have oversight of the research and co-design strategies to implement GLA:D® in Ireland.

IMPACT



**Implementation of
osteoArthritis Clinical
Guidelines Together**

IMPACT Research Project Co-Applicants/Collaborators: Dr. Clodagh Toomey (PI, University of Limerick (UL)), Prof Norelee Kennedy (UL), Prof Anne MacFarlane (UL), Prof Liam Glynn (UL), Prof John Forbes (UL), Prof Ewa Roos (University of Southern Denmark (SDU)), Prof Soren Skou (SDU).

IMPACT Project Steering Committee:

Jacqui Browne (RIP in 2025 - Patient representative)
Martina Blake (Arthritis Ireland)
Adrian Cassar-Gheiti (Orthopaedic Consultant)
Ian Dowling (Clinical Physiotherapist)
Helen French (RCSI, Physiotherapist Academic)
Stacey Grealis (Patient representative)
Peter Hayes (UL, GP and Academic)

Norelee Kennedy (UL, Physiotherapist Academic)
Darragh Maguire (Clinical Physiotherapist)
Brenda Monaghan (TCD, Clinical Physiotherapist)
John O'Hora (CHN Manager Sligo/South Donegal)
Clodagh Toomey (UL, Physiotherapist Academic)
James Young (GLA:D International Network)



WHAT IS GLA:D®?

GLA:D® is an **education and exercise programme** that has helped over 100,000 people with hip and knee osteoarthritis (OA) manage their symptoms of pain and loss of function.

GLA:D® stands for Good Life with osteoArthritis from Denmark and was first developed in Denmark in 2013, before expanding to 10 other countries around the world.

The programme reflects the latest research and has been developed and adapted based on feedback from people with OA, as well as healthcare professionals who provide care to individuals with mild to severe symptoms in Ireland. GLA:D® therefore provides **an evidence-based approach that works in the real world.**



THREE PARTS OF GLA:D®

1 Course for Physiotherapists

2-Day (hybrid) continuous professional development course for physiotherapists with theory and interactive practical and discussion sessions



2 GLA:D® Group Exercise & Education Programme Delivery

The 8-week GLA:D® programme is delivered by certified physiotherapists to people with hip and knee OA in clinics and hospitals around Ireland. Group sessions that are tailored to each patient's needs and goals consists of:

- 2 (or 3) education sessions
- 12 supervised exercise sessions (held twice weekly)



3 GLA:D® National Registry for Patient Outcomes

Patient questionnaires are completed with consent, before and after the programme, to monitor how GLA:D® affects patient outcomes like pain, function and quality of life in Ireland.



TRAINING OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

The first GLA:D® Ireland Course for Physiotherapists was held at the University of Limerick in October 2021. Danish programme co-developer Ewa Roos and trainer Sarah Kroman provided training on the GLA:D® concept. The programme was then adapted to the Irish setting by the project steering committee and has now been running for four years.

From October 2021 to December 2025,
11 courses were held in Ireland, with **263**
physiotherapists certified to deliver GLA:D®

“ I think it gave patients a love for exercise and it showed them the benefits and gave them the tools to continue after the course, which was nice.
 GLA:D trained Primary Care Physiotherapist ”



GLA:D training course for physiotherapists in Castlebar in June 2025.

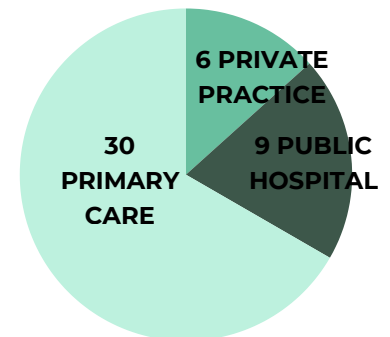


97% of physiotherapists agreed or strongly agreed that they were **satisfied** with the course.



By 2025, 45 sites offered
GLA:D® across all four
 provinces in Ireland.

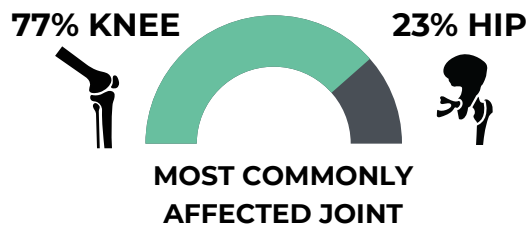
Up-to-date lists of sites offering
 GLA:D® can be found on the
[website](https://www.gladireland.ie).



Interested in becoming a GLA:D® certified physiotherapist? Details on upcoming courses are found [here](https://www.gladireland.ie)

GLA:D® IRELAND PARTICIPANTS

Between October 2021 and December 2025, at least 1056 people with hip or knee osteoarthritis took part in the GLA:D® programme in Ireland. Participants were asked to complete a set of questionnaires before and after the programme, and again 12 months later. There were 636 participants who completed a baseline and 352 completed follow-up questionnaires.



69% had pain in more than one joint



72% of those who participated in GLA:D® were **women**.



The **average age was 65 years**. The youngest participant was in their 30's, while the oldest participant was in their 90's.



The average **Body Mass Index (BMI)** of participants was **31.0**. There were 86% of knee participants and 78% of hip participants who were **overweight or obese**.

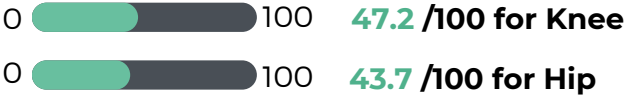


Most were referred to GLA:D by their **GP or other physician (49%)**. Other sources of referral included clinic waitlists, advanced practice physiotherapist, orthopaedic consultant or self-referral.



Symptoms before starting GLA:D®

Average pain on Visual Analog Scale (VAS)



Joint stiffness in the morning



Reduced movement in the joint

Painkiller Use

68% of knee participants and **77% of hip** participants reported taking painkillers in the previous 2 weeks.

Previous Surgery

23% of knee participants and **16% of hip** participants had undergone joint surgery before starting in GLA:D®.

Other Health Conditions

95% of all participants reported having another health condition. The most common conditions reported were high blood pressure (24%), high cholesterol (22%), back pain (20%), and osteoarthritis in the hand or fingers (14%).

GLA:D®: FOLLOW-UP RESULTS

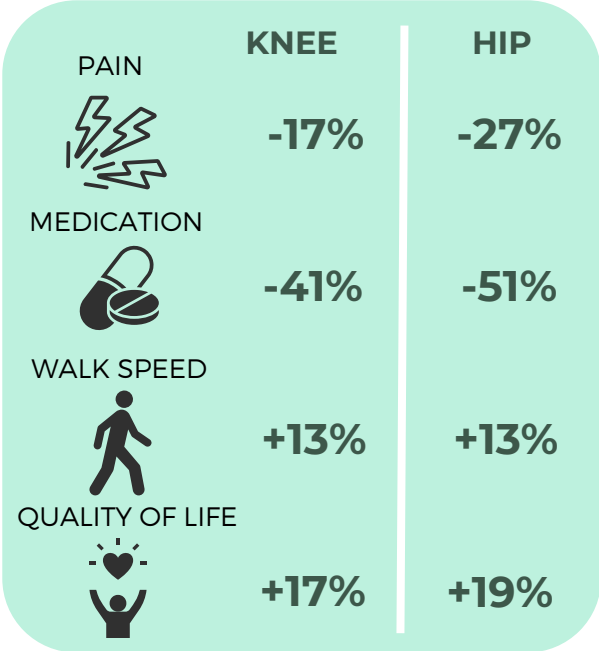
The immediate changes in patient outcomes after participation in a 7-8 week GLA:D® Ireland programme are presented below.

LESS PAIN

After GLA:D®, the **average pain reduced** by **17%** (from 48.1 to 40.0 mm on VAS (visual analogue scale) 0-100) for **knee** participants and **27%** (from 43.6 to 32.0 on VAS 0-100) for **hip** participants.

LESS PAIN MEDICATION

After GLA:D®, **41% of knee** participants and **51% of hip** participants reported that they were using **less or much less medication**, such as paracetamol, NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) or opioids.



I found this programme really good for my health, the team were brilliant and very patient with us throughout the whole programme. It has made such a difference to my life. I no longer worry about hip replacement. I feel the GLA:D Programme should be available to all people who need it, and that all doctors should recommend it to patients that have hip problems.

66 year-old participant with hip pain, 12 months after the GLA:D Programme.



BETTER PHYSICAL FUNCTION

After GLA:D®, the **number of sit to stands** in 30 seconds increased by **24%** (from 11.2 to 13.9 repetitions) for knee participants and increased by **20%** (from 11.3 to 13.5 repetitions) for hip participants.

The average **walking speed increased** by **13%** (from 1.37 m/sec to 1.55 m/sec) for knee participants and **13%** (from 1.35 m/sec to 1.53 m/sec) for hip participants.

HIGHER QUALITY OF LIFE

Average **joint-related quality of life increased** by **17%** (Knee injury and Osteoarthritis Outcome Score QoL from 42 to 49) and **19%** (Hip disability and Osteoarthritis Outcome Score QoL from 47 to 56) respectively.

GLA:D®: FOLLOW-UP RESULTS

HIGH ATTENDANCE AND SATISFACTION



2 IN 3 PARTICIPANTS RATED
THEIR JOINT PROBLEM AS
**SOMEWHAT BETTER, BETTER
OR MUCH BETTER** 1 YEAR AFTER
GLA:D.

RESULTS ONE YEAR AFTER GLA:D®

To measure the long-term effect of GLA:D®, participants were asked to complete a health questionnaire one year later. Results were as follows:

CONDITION IMPROVEMENT



GLA:D® participants experienced a meaningful improvement in the management of their Osteoarthritis, **63%** of participants felt that their affected joint had **slightly, strongly or completely recovered** compared with before GLA:D®.

LESS MEDICATION



One year after GLA:D® **38%** (knee) and **37%** (hip) of participants reported that they were still using **less or much less medication**, such as paracetamol, NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) or opioids.

HIGHER QUALITY OF LIFE



Average **joint-related quality of life increased** by **16%** (Knee injury and Osteoarthritis Outcome Score QoL from 45 to 51), one year after GLA:D®

FEWER ON SICK LEAVE



The proportion of people reporting taking **sick leave** due to their hip or knee pain in the past year **reduced from 12% to 9%**.

LESS DESIRE FOR SURGERY



There were 15 participants who underwent joint replacement surgery in the year following GLA:D®. The number of people who wanted to undergo surgery prior to GLA:D® **reduced from 30% to 25%** (knee) and from **22% to 15%** (hip) one year after the programme.

LATEST GLA:D® RESEARCH

Data collected from GLA:D® participants is anonymised (meaning participants cannot be identified) and used to provide summaries and conduct analyses to inform our understanding of treatments that help to manage osteoarthritis. This is used to improve decision-making in healthcare policy and practice.

GLA:D® has now been around for over 10 years, in 11 different countries with over 10,000 trained clinicians and 150,000 participants. Some of the latest published research results from GLA:D International data and Irish researchers are presented below with links to the original research papers. References can also be found on www.gladireland.ie/research

Policy Brief Launch

Research conducted in Ireland on osteoarthritis has contributed to the launch of a Policy Brief to improve healthcare services and ensure all people in Ireland with osteoarthritis get access to evidence-based care. This brief, based on GLA:D Ireland research, recommends that structured group-based physiotherapist-supervised education and exercise be first line of treatment for people with hip and knee osteoarthritis. While a bottom-up approach has improved access to the GLA:D programme, top-down **resourcing is needed to ensure primary care services around the country can start and continue to offer group-based programmes** and improve wait time for people with osteoarthritis. The full policy brief can be found [here](#).



Irish resource for people with joint pain!

JointPain.ie

Jointpain.ie is an **evidence-based, trustworthy free web resource** for people with joint pain and healthcare professionals. This website was supported by a Health Research Board grant and co-designed with academics, clinicians and people with conditions such as osteoarthritis. Check out the website www.jointpain.ie or scan the QR code.



Dedication

This annual report is dedicated to our valued steering committee member, Jacqui Browne, who passed away in 2025. Jacqui was a huge influence on all of us and was a powerful advocate for patient and disability rights. May she rest in peace.



Need more information?

Contact Us:

Email: gladireland@ul.ie

Website: www.gladireland.ie

POSTAL ADDRESS:

GLA:D IRELAND
C/O DR CLODAGH TOOMEY
HEALTH SCIENCE BUILDING
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK,
CASTLETROY, CO. LIMERICK V94 T9PX



UNIVERSITY OF
LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH



An Bord
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