

iSARAH programme

A FREE ONLINE TRAINING RESOURCE TO DELIVER AN EVIDENCE-BASED HAND EXERCISE PROGRAMME FOR PEOPLE WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Introduction

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic joint disease that commonly affects the joints of the hands and wrists. Clinical features include joint pain, stiffness, inflammation, finger deformities, and reduced grip strength and hand function. People with RA affecting the hands and wrists report limitations in day-to-day tasks such as opening a jar or carrying a shopping bag, and restrictions in their work, leisure, and social activities. Routine therapeutic management for these patients includes joint protection advice, exercise, and splints or assistive devices. Hand exercises are prescribed to improve or maintain joint movements, grip strength and hand function.

The Strengthening And Stretching for the Rheumatoid Arthritis of the Hands (SARAH) programme

The Strengthening And Stretching for Rheumatoid Arthritis of the Hand (SARAH) is a tailored strengthening and stretching hand exercise programme designed for people with RA. It includes 11 exercises and behavioural strategies such as self-monitoring, action planning and goal setting to support home exercise adherence. The programme was compared to usual care in a large multicentre randomised clinical trial^[1] in 490 people with RA in England. The SARAH programme was found to improve hand function, was safe to deliver, and was also cost-effective. These findings led to an update of the United Kingdom's (UK) National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines for treating RA^[2].

Online training on SARAH programme for health professionals (iSARAH)

We recognised the need for an implementation tool to facilitate quicker uptake of evidence-based SARAH programme into clinical practice by health professionals who treat people with RA.

Online training platforms use modern telecommunication and information technologies to deliver information and have the capacity to accommodate multi-modal learning formats such as written materials, multimedia, and self-assessments. Additionally, they are flexible, widely reachable and are cost-effective in terms of time, travel and geographical barriers. Taking advantage of the easy accessibility of the Internet and widespread use of smart telecommunication devices, we developed an online training (iSARAH) programme. The training aimed to provide users with the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver the SARAH programme to patients as part of routine clinical care.

How did we develop iSARAH?

The SARAH implementation team led by Professor Sarah E Lamb and Dr Esther Williamson at the Centre for Rehabilitation Research, University of Oxford, UK developed iSARAH in a three-step process^[3]. A prototype mapping the content of the original SARAH programme to the online training was first developed. Then, an online survey among therapists from different countries to collect suggestions on iSARAH content, design, and navigation features was conducted. Finally, user-centered design principles

were incorporated to construct iSARAH. The preliminary version was tested in 10 therapists to identify and address user issues. The final version of iSARAH is available at <https://isarah.octru.ox.ac.uk>.

What is in iSARAH?

iSARAH was launched in April 2017. iSARAH has all relevant information of the SARAH programme and patient/therapist documents required to implement the programme in practice. It has four brief modules delivered through text, exercise illustrations, and exercise videos. Other features include self-assessment, frequently asked questions, and a resource library. The course is self-paced and takes 2 to 3 hours to complete. On successful completion of training, users download their training completion certificate.

Impact of iSARAH

We evaluated the impact of iSARAH in terms of reach, user satisfaction, practice change and quality of patient care. As of 10th March 2020, we have reached a large nation-wide audience of 1058 National Health Service (NHS) occupational therapists and physiotherapists in the UK, of which 600 therapists completed the training. Most therapists (99%) were satisfied with the training and nearly 85% therapists intended to use the programme in their practice.

Six months' post training, we asked NHS therapists if they used the SARAH programme in their practice. From the feedback received from 116 therapists, two-thirds reported they were prescribing the programme to their patients. A service evaluation conducted in 118 patients from 16 NHS trusts showed similar improvements in hand function and grip strength as the main clinical trial^[1].

iSARAH is now freely available to all health care professionals and students across the world. So far, there are 1318 registered users from 64 countries. The SARAH programme materials have also been

translated into Japanese, Tamil and Turkish languages. Two SARAH service evaluation projects are ongoing in India and Turkey.

In summary, we were able to successfully train therapists to deliver the SARAH programme in routine practice and have widened its implementation on a global level.

Tips to develop successful online training platforms in hand therapy

1. Involve end-users and other key stakeholders in the development process
2. Use variety of delivery methods such as text, videos, photographs, interviews, and testimonies
3. Use simple English, font styles and layouts.
4. Produce simple and short videos.
5. Include support facility for technical queries.

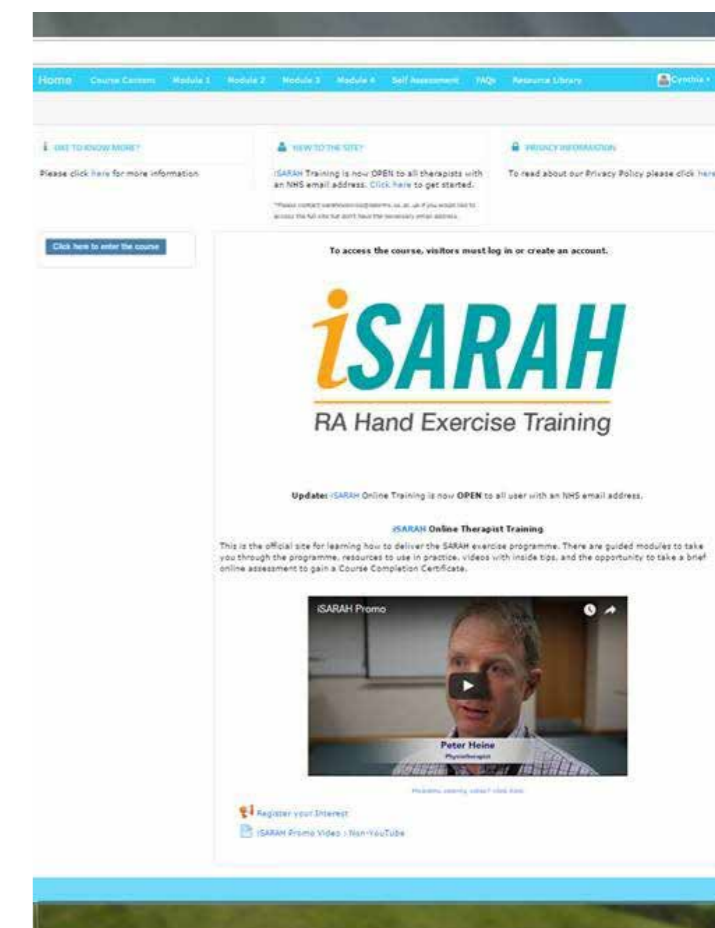


Figure 1: Screenshot of Home page

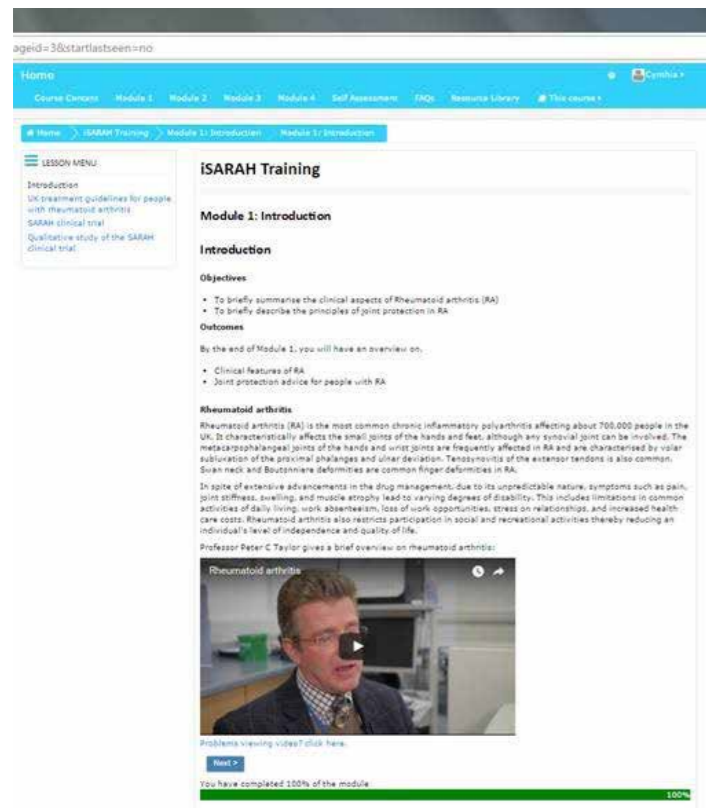


Figure 2: Screenshot of Introduction page

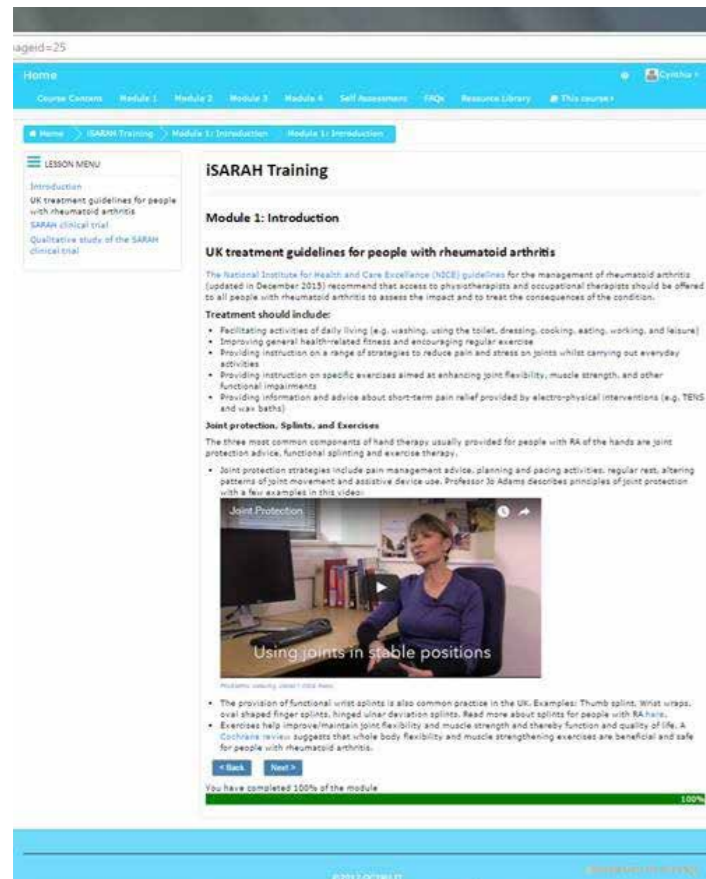


Figure 3: Screenshot of a section on joint protection advice

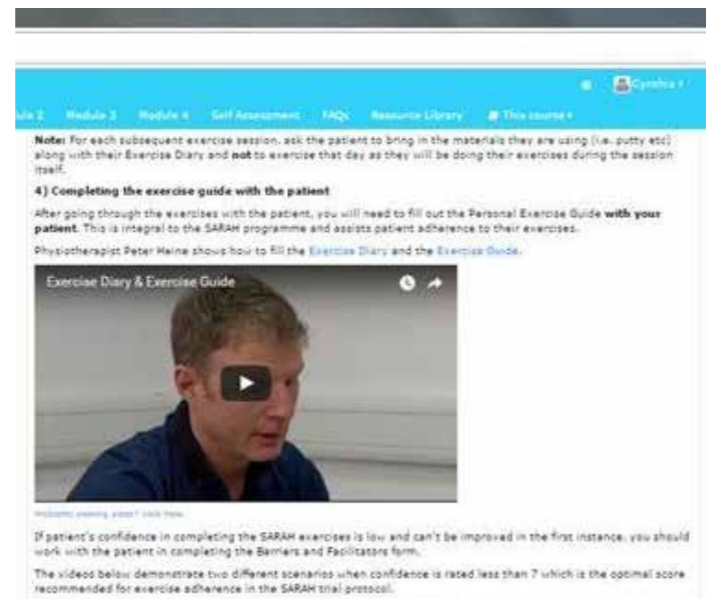


Figure 4: Screenshots of exercise videos SARAH exercises



Figure 5: SARAH exercises

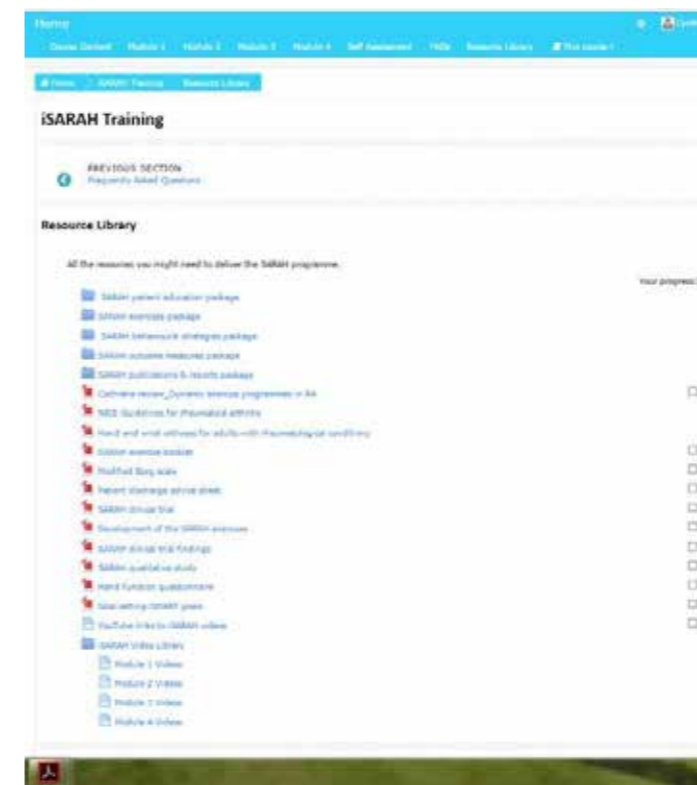


Figure 6: Screenshot of resource library page

References

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