

Updating the Patient Partners Educational Program for Rheumatoid Arthritis in Belgium: a systematic, scientific-based approach led by patient experts

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Patient Partner Program:

The concept

- **What?**

Patient Partners (PP) are expert patients who train medical students, general practitioners and other healthcare providers about the clinical presentation of rheumatoid arthritis (RA)

- **Aim?**

Fast diagnosis and early treatment initiation by improving musculoskeletal examination skills, creating awareness and facilitating appropriate referrals

Patient Partner Program:

Need for an update: why?

(1) New scientific insights in early RA

- early intensive treatment strategies
- patient beliefs and preferences
- the hurdles to implement optimal care strategies

(2) Better control of disease → less classical joint deformities and reduced symptoms



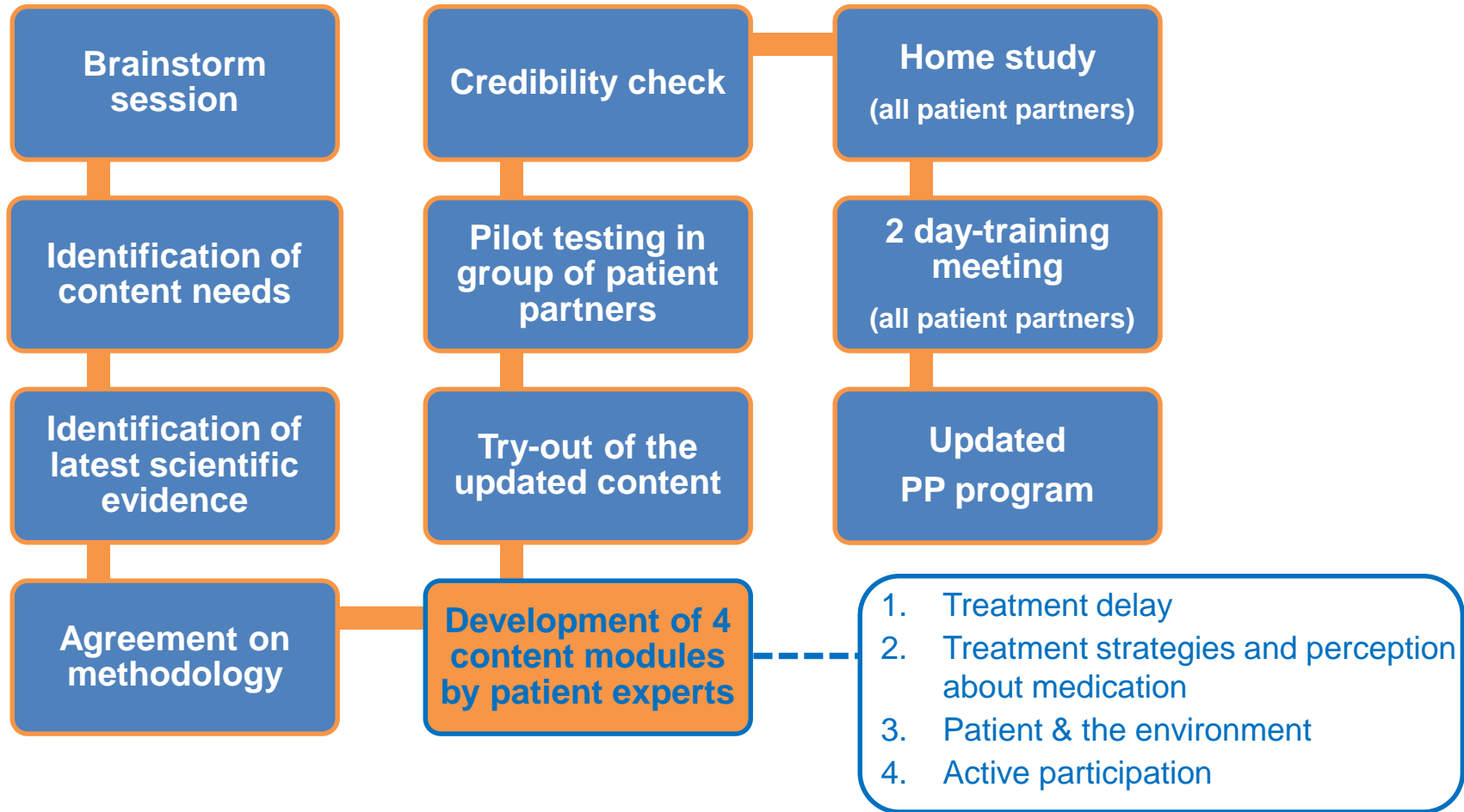
Objective: to critically review and update the PP Program for RA in Flanders

Updating the Patient Partner Program:

Methods

- **How?**
 - a systematic, scientific-based approach
 - led by patient experts
- **Who?**
 - 7 patient partners
 - 1 rheumatologist
 - 1 nurse specialist
 - 2 doctoral researchers
 - 1 medical student
 - 1 general practitioner

Updating the Patient Partner Program: *Approach*



Updating the Patient Partner Program

Result: **4 content modules**

Module 1: Avoiding treatment delay

- **Principle: diagnosing within 12 weeks**
 - clinical evaluation and medical history ↔ RX and laboratory
 - complete musculoskeletal examination
- **Appropriate referral**
 - glucocorticoids can hide the clinical presentation
 - response on NSAIDs is reason to refer

Updating the Patient Partner Program

Result: **4 content modules**

Module 2: Treatment strategies and perception about medication

- Need for early and intensive treatment
- 1st step: MTX and bridging glucocorticoids
- Contextual information taking into account patients' views
- Information about potential future therapeutic options

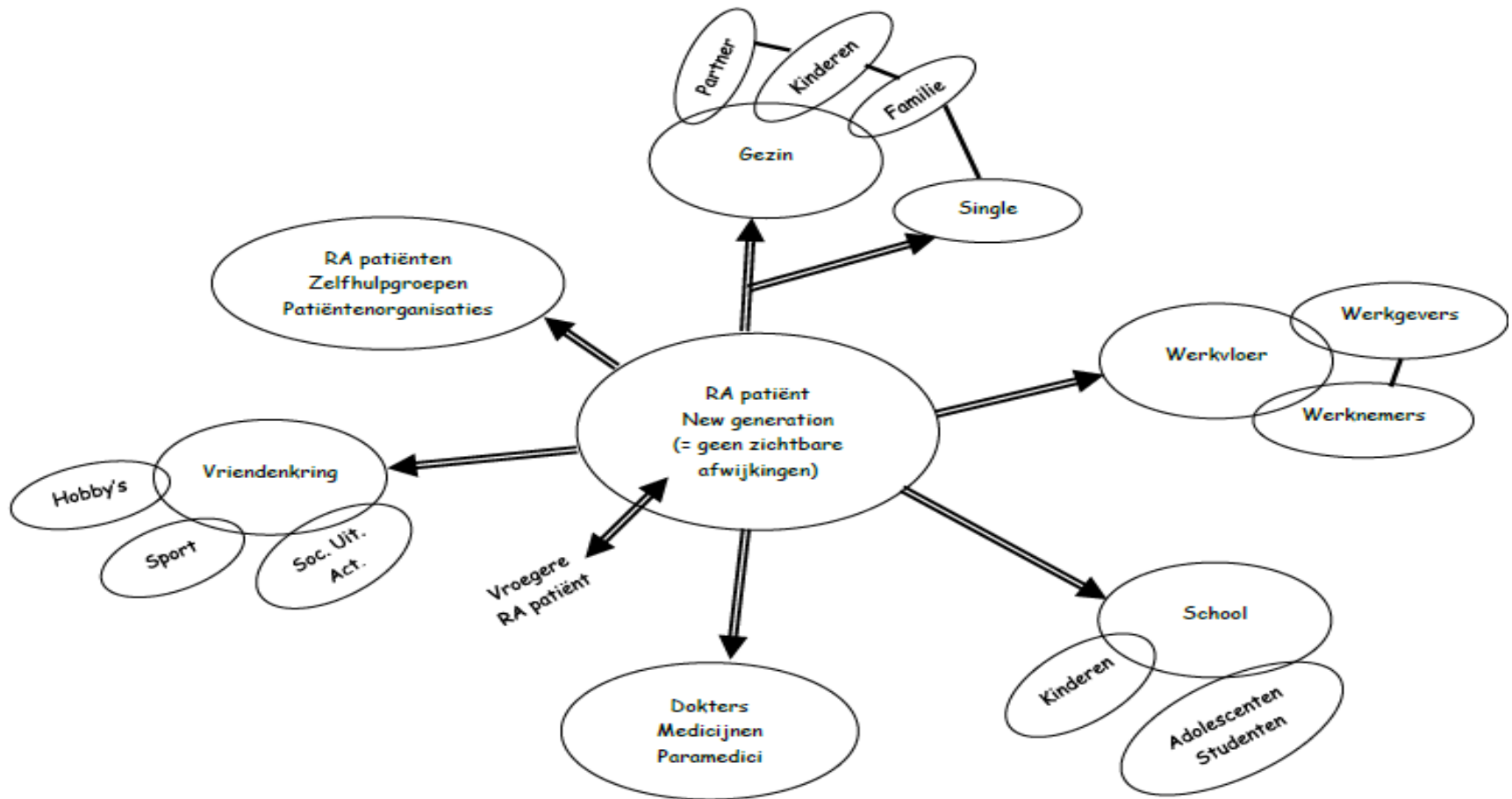
Updating the Patient Partner Program: Result: *4 content modules*

Module 3:

- Creating awareness about factors patients are confronted with in their environment
 - physical
 - psycho-emotional
 - relational
 - social
- Inviting for active coping with disease and an open discussion

Updating the Patient Partner Program: Result: *4 content modules*

Module 3:



Updating the Patient Partner Program: Result: **4 content modules**

Module 4: Active participation

- Shared decision making
- Adherence
- Organizing life
- Highlighting the importance of physical activity (does not increase inflammation)
- Answering patients' questions about nutrition

Updating the Patient Partner Program:

Take home messages

Thank you for your attention!

- The clinical joint evaluation stays in the center
- Refining classical history taking
- Less focus on classical joint deformities
- Highlighting:
 - 1) Factors that lead to reduced treatment delay
 - 2) Correct treatment strategies and perception about medication to improve adherence
 - 3) Factors important to patients & their environment: relational and psycho-emotional, organized life
 - 4) Active participation: shared decision making, physical activity
- Initiated and developed by patients based on science. Ready to implement and to be evaluated.