



# The Assessment of Patients with Recurrent Patellar Instability

August 2020

## BOA Specialty Standard

### Background and justification

The scope of this guidance is to provide recommendations for the assessment of skeletally mature patients with recurrent patellar instability and no significant degenerative change.

### Summary of Audit Standards

1. The diagnosis and clinical assessment of recurrent instability involves patient-specific assessment, based on:
  - A history of recurrent patellar dislocation, or clear history of recurrent subluxation.
  - A history of instability symptoms and their pattern.
  - Acute and chronic pain.
  - Parameters in the history which constitute risk factors for patellar instability (History of first event and age of onset, bilateral instability, family history).
  - Previous surgical interventions.
  - A detailed history of the exact nature of previous physiotherapy, compliance and barriers to physiotherapy progression should be elicited.
  - An assessment of generalised joint hypermobility
  - Clinical evaluation of the rotational profile of the limb and the presence of coronal deformity
  - The potential for non-operative interventions including physiotherapy to improve the patient's outcome.
2. Radiographs should include: antero-posterior (or PA); true lateral at 20-30 degrees flexion; and axial (skyline) views at 20-30 degrees knee flexion. These images aim to detect:
  - Patella alta (see point 5)
  - Degenerative change
  - Loose osteochondral fragment
  - Trochlear Dysplasia
3. Further imaging investigations should include an MRI of the knee (unless MRI contra-indicated) which includes axial and sagittal images. The MRI aims to outline:
  - Patella alta (see point 5)
  - Degenerative change or cartilage loss
  - Loose osteochondral or chondral fragment
  - Meniscal and ligamentous pathology
  - Trochlear dysplasia
  - Tibial tuberosity offset
4. Consider further imaging investigation, in select cases only, based on individual clinical findings:
  - Long leg radiographs to assess coronal plane alignment
  - CT to assess rotational alignment of femur and tibia
5. Determination of patella alta involves assessment of the clinical picture and radiological imaging, and may include indices such as patellotrochlear overlap, Caton-Dechamps ratio or Blackburne-Peel ratio according to published normal ranges.