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Balneotherapy at the Dead Sea area for knee osteoarthritis.

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BACKGROUND: Balneotherapy at the Dead Sea area has been applied in various inflammatory rheumatic diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis. The efficacy of balneotherapy at the Dead Sea area for the treatment of degenerative rheumatic diseases has not yet been formally evaluated. **OBJECTIVE:** To evaluate the efficacy of balneotherapy at the Dead Sea area in patients suffering from osteoarthritis of the knees. **METHODS:** Forty patients were randomly allocated into four groups of 10 patients. Group 1 was treated by bathing in a sulphur pool, group 2 by bathing in the Dead Sea, group 3 by a combination of sulphur pool and bathing in the Dead Sea, and group 4 served as the control group receiving no balneotherapy. The duration of balneotherapy was 2 weeks. **RESULTS:** Significant improvement as measured by the Lequesne index of severity of osteoarthritis was observed in all three treatment groups, but not in the control group. This improvement lasted up to 3 months of follow-up in patients in all three treatment groups. **CONCLUSION:** Balneotherapy at the Dead Sea area has a beneficial effect on patients with osteoarthritis of the knees, an effect that lasts at least 3 months.