
Final report

Project title: New Zealand Healthcare Providers' Attitudes towards Recommending Online Self-Management Resources for People with Persistent Pain.

Research group

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Aims of the research

(1) To investigate the healthcare providers' knowledge of, and attitudes towards integrating online health resources (website, apps and online forums) into persistent pain management (*Part 1 – National online survey*).

(2) To explore the barriers and enablers to recommending online resources for people with persistent pain (*Part 2 - Group and individual interviews*).

Part 1 - National online survey summary

We conducted an online survey of healthcare providers in New Zealand. We asked about their background, their current practice in recommending online resources to their clients, what resources they recommend, and what concerns they have with recommending online resources.

Key findings

- 261 respondents started the survey, 213 were used for final analysis.
- Most of the healthcare providers were physiotherapists (n = 71), followed by chiropractors (n = 39), general practitioners (n = 31), occupational therapists (n = 19), and specialist consultants (n = 14).

- About half (n = 111) of the 213 respondents recommend online resources.
- Respondents who had a specialist interest in pain, and higher confidence in recommending online resources were more likely to be recommending online resources.
- Many respondents were concerned about the safety issues related to the risk of clients misinterpreting online information and to the lack of evidence-based resources.

The common online resources that were recommended by NZ healthcare providers were:

Resources most commonly recommended by NZ healthcare providers

Neuro Orthopaedic Institute's (NOI) group resources

<http://www.noigroup.com/en/Resources>

e.g., Tame the Beast, <https://bodyinmind.org/>, Explain Pain, Lorimer Moseley YouTube clips, Recognise™ or Orientate app, Graded Motor Imagery resources

Mindfulness apps or websites or YouTube videos

e.g., Headspace app, Smiling Mind

Retrain pain foundation

<https://www.retrainpain.org/>

Various 5-minute talks on pain

e.g., <http://www.hnehealth.nsw.gov.au/Pain/Pages/Brainman-Videos.aspx>

Peter O'Sullivan videos

<http://www.pain-ed.com/>

Pain Tool Kit resources

<https://www.paintoolkit.org/>

Australian Centre for Innovation (ACI) website on chronic pain

<https://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/chronic-pain>

Health Navigator

<https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/c/chronic-pain/>

Pain Health

<https://painhealth.csse.uwa.edu.au/>

Note: We have not conducted any quality analyses of these resources as part of this project.

Part 2 - Interviews summary

From the survey respondents who indicated that we could contact them, 31 participants from different healthcare professions took part in Part 2. Three focus groups were conducted face-to-face in Wellington, Christchurch and Rotorua. We held eleven individual interviews across New Zealand either face-to-face, or via videoconferencing or by phone. We used the General Inductive approach to guide our analysis.

Two main themes emerged from analyses of the conversations:

- **Online resources as a double-edged sword.** Although, the participants valued online resources as an useful adjunct to support pain self-management, in their current form, they were considered as a ‘double edged sword’ where the information provided by the online resources could be both beneficial and detrimental to supporting people with persistent pain and their families. For example:

“You have got to be careful because it could be a double-edged sword, because they can give lots of misinformation as well as good information, depending what the resource is”.

Concerns were particularly raised regarding online forums, chat rooms, and social media (e.g. Facebook™) support groups as they are not regulated and/or moderated by trained healthcare providers. As a result, participants felt online-resources could only be a useful adjunct to in-person treatment when curated by healthcare providers, but not a replacement. As a participant explained,

“I will access stuff while the client is with me just to check out first of all, their capability to do it outside a session”.

- **Barriers to the uptake of online resources.** Participants expressed a number of barriers to recommending online resources as well as limited uptake of online resources by their patients. For example, participants cited time constraints to evaluate the online resources as a barrier to recommend online resources. They were also concerned with costs involved for the patient, literacy level of the patient, and accessibility issues related to technology.

“There is still a lot of people who don’t actually have an email, and either that is because they don’t have a computer or they don’t like using technology. So I think we shouldn’t forget that those online resources, even if they are good people won’t use them because they don’t have technology”.

The need for cultural tailoring of the resources was also felt as a barrier to the uptake of online resources by some patients with persistent pain.

“We have the treaty in New Zealand, we have an obligation to include or have a Kaupapa Māori theme to what we do”

Publications/Presentations

Devan H, Godfrey HK, Perry MA, Hempel D, Saipe B, Hale L, Grainger R. Current practices of healthcare providers in recommending online resources for pain self-management. *Journal of Pain Research (Under review)*

Areli E, Godfrey HK, Perry MA, Hempel D, Saipe B, Hale L, Grainger R, Devan H. "I think there is nothing that adjuncts, there is nothing at the moment" New Zealand healthcare providers' views on online resources for supporting pain self-management. *Patient Education and Counseling (In preparation for submission)*

Godfrey HK, Devan H, Perry MA, Hempel D, Saipe B, Hale L, Grainger R. (2019, March). Healthcare providers' attitudes towards recommending online self-Management resources for people with persistent pain. *Verbal presentation at the New Zealand Pain Society Annual Scientific Meeting, Christchurch, New Zealand.*

Areli E, Devan H, Godfrey HK, Perry MA, Hempel D, Saipe B, Grainger R, Hale L (2019, March). "I think there is nothing that adjuncts, there is nothing at the moment": New Zealand healthcare providers' views on online resources for supporting pain self-management. *Verbal presentation at the New Zealand Pain Society Annual Scientific Meeting, Christchurch, New Zealand.*

Next steps

This research project is part of an ongoing programme of work to co-create and evaluate culturally appropriate behavioural intervention technologies for self-management support of people with persistent pain (Pain BITS)

<https://www.otago.ac.nz/physio/research/ageing/otago666197.html>.

In line with the recommendations from this research, we are planning to work with professional organisations to maximise the opportunities for ongoing education to healthcare providers on evidence-based online resources for pain self-management.

We would also welcome your suggestions and feedback on this report.

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