



Health literacy in Low back Pain:

the HELP media intervention study – September 2024

FACTS:

- Global prevalence of low back pain is projected to reach 843 million people by 2050.
- It impacts 70 - 90% of people over their lifetime, leading to lost work productivity and early retirement.
- The Australian healthcare system spends approximately AUD\$4.8 billion annually on managing low back pain.
- Primary care and medical referrals account for 35% of the expenditure spent in managing low back pain.

PROJECT CYCLE:

2023–2025

PARTNERS:

The George Institute for Global Health, Australia

The University of Sydney, Australia

Tonic Health Media Limited, Australia

SUPPORTERS:

The George Institute for Global Health, Australia

National Health and Medical Research Council, Australia

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BACKGROUND:

- Low back pain is the leading cause of disability worldwide and one of the most common reasons for people to visit a general practitioner (GP) in Australia.
- Despite its significant burden, many patients are still receiving care that is not evidence-based (e.g. opioids and routine imaging).
- There are limited health initiatives that provide credible health advice to address patients' misconceptions about management of low back pain.

AIM:

- To evaluate the effectiveness of a media-led intervention to change patient beliefs and attitudes about low back pain management.
- To assess the impact of our intervention on medication prescriptions and referrals.

METHODS:

- The HELP trial is a randomised controlled study involving 30 large GP clinics in Sydney, Australia, where different clinics start the trial at different times to compare results.
- Two educational videos containing evidence-based information will be broadcasted in GP clinic waiting rooms.
- Patients' beliefs and attitudes towards low back pain will be evaluated using two validated questionnaires.
- Patterns in prescription and referral for low back pain will be compared between groups using aggregated data from participating clinics.

IMPACT

- Improve patient access to evidence-based information on the management of low back pain.
- Promote the alignment of low back pain management with evidence-based practices in primary care settings.
- Reduce the burden on healthcare and promote cost savings by decreasing unnecessary medical imaging and specialist referrals.

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