

## Language: A Major Barrier between Health Care Providers and Patients?

In a recent edition of the Back Letter, the editors reviewed a study by Barker et al. that looked into the divide between health care professionals and the general public caused by a lack of common language in relation to low back pain.

The study from Great Britain involved lay participants and a mixed group of health professionals including GP's and physiotherapists.

The study noted that the lay participants understood the majority of the terms explored in the group differently to the health professionals. Barker et al. noted that the words discussed were often not understood or were misconstrued and many had inadvertent negative connotations or implications.

It was noted that not a single lay participant was familiar with the concept of "non-specific back pain" and the subjects also had trouble understanding the meaning of "acute". Barker et al. noted that the lay subjects were familiar with the word "chronic" but many felt it had a negative meaning synonymous with "severe and incurable".

Barker et al. noted that health care professionals sometimes try to play down age related degenerative changes by using the phrase "wear and tear". They cautioned against this practice, given that in their study to some of the lay participants "wear and tear" was worrisome, conveying negative meanings including "wearing out", "worn out" and even "rotting away".

The study noted that the health care providers were aware of language difficulties and tried to overcome them, however those efforts often appeared to fail. The study noted that the lay participants generally did not feel that health professionals adequately explained terms and back pain in an understandable way.

They concluded that health care providers and patients need to engage in an explicit dialogue about language. Health care providers need to provide clear explanations to allow their patients to have a good understanding

of their low back pain and continue communicating this message until they are sure that their patients "are on the same page".

The Back Letter Vol.24, No.11  
November 2009.

Barker K L et al. **Divided by a lack of common language? A qualitative study exploring the use of language by health professionals treating back pain.** BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders, 2009; 10:123.

## National Pain Strategy.

A draft National Pain Strategy that has been led by the Australian / New Zealand College of Anaesthetists, the Facility of Pain Medicine, the Australian Pain Society and the Chronic Pain Australia Organization will culminate in a national Pain Summit in March 2010 in Canberra. From this the release of a National Pain Strategy will occur.

The strategy has been generated over the past few years and many hours of meetings by a broad group of consumers and health professionals and health funders have taken place. The goal of the initiative is to conduct a comprehensive overview of the state of pain in Australia and to outline a clear strategy to create improvements that are clearly needed.

The draft National Pain Strategy (Version 18th October 2009) quotes the Pain Management Research Institute that estimates that chronic pain costs the Australian economy 34 billion dollars per annum. They note that acute pain, cancer pain and chronic non-cancer pain are poorly managed.

The draft document notes that "expert consensus and a growing body of research says that best practice pain management requires co-ordinated interdisciplinary assessment and management involving, at a minimum, physical, psychological and environmental factors in each patient".

The authors stress that early assessment be carried out and that chronic pain be seen as a disease entity in itself with a diagnostic code in order to document its prevalence, outcome and costs.

One of the key strategies the document highlights and calls for is to develop a funding model for interdisciplinary

pain management in the community including pain management Medicare item numbers for accredited, advanced - skilled practitioners, and funding for self management programs (including group programs).

The draft document calls for the provision of funding for intensive interdisciplinary, cognitive behavioural programs for appropriate candidates.

The author's of the draft National Pain Strategy conclude that many pain sufferers experience significant associated disability and distress. They note there is accumulating evidence that we can predict many of these problems, we can prevent them and we can palliate them.

Hopefully with the release of the National Pain Strategy and the powerful lobby group behind it, Australian patients suffering with pain will be better serviced by evidence based, accessible and effective pain management services.

Draft National Pain Strategy 18th  
October 2009.

*Melissa Walter*

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## Conference Calendar

**Australian Pain Society and New Zealand Pain Society Combined Conference 2010. "The Impact of Pain", March 28-31, 2010, Gold Coast, Australia**

www.dconferences.com.au/apsnzps or contact DCConference at (61)2 9954 4400

**Spine Society of Australia ASM, April 9-11 Christchurch Convention Centre, Christchurch New Zealand**  
contact www.dconferences.com.au

**Annual Scientific Meeting of the British Pain Society, April 13-16, 2010, Manchester, UK, 2010** (Tel: 44-020-7269-7840; Fax: 44-020-7831-0859; Email: meetings@britishpainsociety.org; Web: www.britishpainsociety.org

**Third International Congress on Neuropathic Pain, May 27-30, 2010, Athens, Greece**  
(Tel: +41 22 908 0488;  
Fax: +41 22 732 2850;  
Email: neuropathic@kenes.com;  
Web: www.kenes.com/neuropathic)

**13th WORLD CONGRESS ON PAIN® August 29 – September 2, 2010, Montréal, QC, Canada International Association for the Study of Pain® IASP®).**  
Email: iaspdesk@iasp-pain.org; Web: www.iasp-pain.org/Montreal

**Rehabilitation 2010 - Mind and Body October 6-8, 2010, Melbourne, Australia** Website: <http://dconferences.com.au/rehab2010>

**Seventh East-West Pain Conference, October 8-10, 2010, Beijing, China,**  
Email: ywan@hsc.pku.edu.cn or bjqinghual@vip.sina.com;  
Web: www.casp.org.cn/ewpc/

**The 14th International Pain Clinic Congress & The 1st Asian Congress on "From Ancient to Modern Pain Medicine" October 28-31, 2010, Beijing, China**  
Email: wspc@kenes.com; Web: www.kenes.com/wspc)  
4th Asia Pacific Cervical Spine Society Conference, November 3-6, 2010, Sydney Australia,  
Website: <http://dconferences.com.au/apcss/>

## Research Update

**Obesity and recovery from low back pain: a prospective study to investigate the effect of body mass index on recovery from low back pain,** Mangwani, Jitendra; Giles, Claire; Mullins, Mark; Salih, Tuncar; Natali, Colin, *Annals of The Royal College of Surgeons of England* (ISSN: 0035-8843); Volume 92, No. 1, pp. 23-26(4); January 2010

**Psychometric properties of the Roland-Morris Disability Questionnaire compared to the Oswestry Disability Index: a systematic review**  
Davies, Claire C.; Nitz, Arthur J. *Physical Therapy Reviews* (ISSN: 1083-3196); Volume 14, No. 6, pp. 399-408(10); December 2009  
Maney Publishing

**Exercise interventions for non-specific low back pain: an overview of systematic reviews**  
Swinkels, Annette; Cochrane, Kirsty; Burt, Adam; Johnson, Lucy; Lunn, Thomas; Rees, Anna Sian  
*Physical Therapy Reviews* (ISSN: 1083-3196); Volume 14, No. 4, pp. 247-259(13); August 2009, Maney Publishing

**Spinal manipulative therapy for low back pain: A systematic review**  
Rajadurai, Viswas; Murugan, Karthikeyan, *Physical Therapy Reviews* (ISSN: 1083-3196); Volume 14, No. 4, pp. 260-271(12); August 2009  
Maney Publishing

**An interpretative phenomenological analysis of living with chronic low back pain.** Snelgrove, Sherrill; Liossi, Christina *British Journal of Health Psychology* (ISSN: 1359-107X); Volume 14, No. 4, pp. 735-749(15); November 2009) British Psychological Society

**Socioeconomic status predicts functional disability in patients participating in a back pain trial,** Klaber Moffett, J.A.; Underwood, M. R.; Gardiner, E. D., *Disability and Rehabilitation* (ISSN: 0963-8288); Volume 31, No. 10, pp. 783-790(8); May 2009 Informa Healthcare

**Long-Acting Opioids and Short-Acting Opioids: Appropriate Use in Chronic Pain Management,** Fine, Perry G.; Mahajan, Gagan; McPherson, Mary Lynn *Pain Medicine* (ISSN: 1526-2375); Volume 10, No. S2, pp. S79-S88(1); July/August 2009 Blackwell Publishing Inc

**Spinal Cord Stimulation: A 20-Year Retrospective Analysis in 260 Patients**  
Reig, Enrique; Abejon, David  
*Neuromodulation* (ISSN: 1094-7159); Volume 12, No. 3, pp. 232-239(8); July 2009 Blackwell Publishing Inc

**Low back pain patients in primary care: Subgroups based on the multidimensional pain inventory**  
Johansson, Eva; Lindberg, Per  
*International Journal of Behavioral Medicine* (ISSN: 1070-5503); Volume 7, No. 4, pp. 340(13); December 2000  
Springer-Verlag

**Is smoking and alcohol consumption associated with long-term sick leave due to unspecific back or neck pain among employees in the public sector? Results of a three-year follow-up cohort study**  
Skillgate, Eva; Vingard, Eva; Josephson, Malin; Holm, Lena W.; Alfredsson, Lars  
*Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine* (ISSN: 1650-1977); Volume 41, No. 7, pp. 550-556(7); June 2009  
Medical Journals Limited

**Pretreatment Psychosocial Variables as Predictors of Outcomes Following Lumbar Surgery and Spinal Cord Stimulation: A Systematic Review and Literature Synthesis**  
Celestin, James; Edwards, Robert R.; Jamison, Robert N.  
*Pain Medicine* (ISSN: 1526-2375); Volume 10, No. 4, pp. 639-653(15); May/June 2009  
Blackwell Publishing Inc page".

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