

## Beyond Pain Conference

A one day conference was held in Sydney on 29 March 2006 focussing on strategies to manage chronic pain to drive productivity and occupational functioning.

A number of expert speakers imparted their knowledge on the topic including Associate Professor Michael Nicholas from the Royal North Shore Hospital and Dr Eva Schonstein from the School of Physiotherapy at the University of Sydney.

Dr Schonstein addressed the question of how to identify the best treatment responders or what phenomena contributes significantly to treatment outcomes. She advocated the early identification of those at risk for long-term disability. She discussed various screening tools and their effectiveness.

The Orebro Musculoskeletal Pain Screening Questionnaire (OMPSQ) was suggested as a useful tool in predicting return to work outcomes. She stated using this screening tool allowed health professionals to target specific interventions to specific worker profiles.

Dr Schonstein stated that health professionals should take a transdisciplinary approach in dealing with people with chronic pain. She stated that transdisciplinary collaboration begins with a recognition that the problem to be addressed is part of a complex system and that its true nature cannot be perceived through the lens of any one discipline.

Dr Michael Nicholas specifically discussed the topic of increasing the productivity of workers with chronic pain. He noted that it is important for all stakeholders involved to seek agreement on common goals. He highlighted the importance of clarifying any misperceptions between stakeholders particularly the worker and employer and the importance of identifying what needs to be done in order to achieve agreed goals.

Professor Nicholas advocated engaging in joint problem solving and stated that in general the fewer people involved the better - i.e. try to limit the number of stakeholders involved.

He stressed the importance of the role of the supervisor in the return to work process. The need for open communication between stakeholders was emphasized and the use of tools for improved communication such as check lists, written protocols etc was also suggested.

He also suggested encouraging engagement of stakeholders - i.e. promoting training / education and taking opportunities for workplace visits by healthcare providers and other stakeholders.

He concluded by saying there are no simple solutions for sustaining return to work in the chronic pain population, however a bio-psychosocial perspective offers hope but only if all stakeholders accept it and work at implementing it. He noted that "no one size fits all" and stakeholder involvement should vary according to the case.

Of interest, Professor Nicholas did note that most people of working age with chronic pain do work, however their chronic pain can limit their performance at work and that many workers have flare-ups in pain against a background of chronic pain.

*Melissa Walter*

## European Guidelines for the Management of Non-specific Low Back Pain

In November 2004 Airaksinen et al published a set of guidelines for managing non-specific low back pain.

The authors conducted a systematic review of a variety of health service interventions and summarised the effectiveness of these conservative treatments for acute and chronic low back pain.

The main objectives of the study were to provide recommendations on strategies to manage chronic low back pain in the general population as well as ensuring an evidence-based approach through the use of systematic reviews and existing evidence-based guidelines.

The other objective of the authors was to identify ineffective interventions so that their use can be limited.

The authors specifically looked at the use of multidisciplinary treatment programs for chronic low back pain.

They examined two systematic reviews (both Cochrane reviews) which included ten randomized controlled trials. They also assessed an additional eleven randomized controlled trials looking at the effectiveness of multidisciplinary treatment for chronic low back pain.

They strongly concluded after conducting the review that there was strong evidence that intensive multidisciplinary biopsychosocial rehabilitation with functional restoration reduces pain and improves function in patients with chronic low back pain.

They also noted that there is strong evidence that intensive multidisciplinary biopsychosocial interventions are effective in terms of return to work and work readiness.

They also noted that there is strong evidence that intensive physical training ("work hardening") programs with a cognitive behavioural component are more effective than usual care in reducing work absenteeism in workers with back pain.

They concluded by saying "we recommend multidisciplinary biopsychosocial rehabilitation with functional restoration for chronic low back pain who have failed monodisciplinary treatment options"

These guidelines can be obtained from: [www.backpaineurope.org/web/html/wg2\\_results.html](http://www.backpaineurope.org/web/html/wg2_results.html)

*European Guidelines for the Management of Chronic Non-Specific Low Back Pain.* O Airaksinen et al. European Commission Research Directorate -General, November 2004. Amended version 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005.

*Ian McKenzie*

**Don't Forget  
Date for your Diary**

**19 July 2006 @ 6 pm**

*Pinot by the Pool  
Wine Tasting*

*hosted by Bill Ryan*

**Our Guest Speaker  
will be**

*Associate Professor  
Bruce McPhee*

**"Will technology  
change our approach  
to the treatment of  
low back pain"**

## Conference Calendar

European Federation of IASP  
Chapters (EFIC)

*Pain in Europe*

13 - 16 September 2006  
Istanbul Turkey

efic@internet.gr      www.efic.org

Pain Management Research  
Institute Royal North Shore  
Hospital Faculty of Medicine, The  
University of Sydney

*Pain Management Symposium*

28 - 29 July 2006

Centenary Lecture Theatre  
Royal North Shore Hospital  
Sydney

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Phone: 02 9926 7386  
Fax: 02 9926 6780  
rwyllie@med.usyd.edu.au  
www.pmri.med.usyd.edu.au

27<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting of  
the Australian Pain Society

*The Torture of Pain*

1 - 4 April 2007

Adelaide Convention Centre

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Australasian Faculty of  
Rehabilitation Medicine  
15<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting

*Implementing the Evidence*

22 - 25 May 2007

Sydney Convention & Exhibition  
Centre  
Darling Harbour - Sydney

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## Research Update

***Nonspecific Lower-back Pain:  
Surgical versus Nonsurgical  
Treatment***

Nordin, M; Balague, F; Cedraschi, C  
Clinical Orthopaedics and Related  
Research 2006 443 156-167  
LIPPINCOTT WILLIAMS & WILKINS  
IS: 0009-921X

***A multicentre randomized  
controlled trial of epidural  
corticosteroid injections for  
sciatica: the WEST study.*** Arden,  
N. K.; Price, C.; Reading, I.;  
Stubbing, J.; Hazelgrove, J.; Dunne,  
C.; Michel, M.; Rogers, P.; Cooper, C.  
Rheumatology November 2005 44 11  
1399-1406(8)

***Worker Recovery Expectations  
and Fear-Avoidance Predict Work  
Disability in a Population-Based  
Workers' Compensation Back Pain  
Sample***

Turner, JA; Franklin, G; FultonKehoe,  
D; Sheppard, L; Wickizer, TM; Wu, R;  
Gluck, JV; Egan, K Spine 2006 31 6  
682-689

***Outcome of non-invasive  
treatment modalities on back  
pain: an evidence-based review***  
Tulder, MW; Koes, B; Malmivaara, A.  
European Spine Journal  
2006 15 1

***Psychological Processes  
Underlying the Development  
of a Chronic Pain Problem:  
A Prospective Study of the  
Relationship Between Profiles  
of Psychological Variables in  
the Fear-Avoidance Model and  
Disability*** Boersma, K; Linton, SJ.  
Clinical Journal of Pain 2006 22 2  
160-166

***Quality of life and maintenance  
of improvements after early  
multimodal rehabilitation: A 5 year  
follow-up***

Westman, A.; Linton, S.; Theorell,  
T.; Ohrvik, J.; Wahlen, P.; Leppert, J.  
Disability and Rehabilitation Number  
7 April 2006 28 7 437-446 (10)

***A Randomized Controlled Trial  
Investigating the Efficiency of  
Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy  
on Chronic Low Back Disorder***  
Goldby, LJ; Moore, AP; Doust, J;  
Trew, ME Spine (ISSN: 0362-2436);  
Volume 31, No. 10, pp. 1083-1093;  
2006

***Prevalence of Psychiatric  
Disorders in Patients with Chronic  
Disabling Occupational Spinal  
Disorders*** Dersh, J; Gatchel, RJ;  
Mayer, T; Polatin, P; Temple, OR.  
Spine (ISSN: 0362-2436); Volume  
31, No. 10, pp. 1156-1162; 2006

***A Cochrane Review of Superficial  
Heat or Cold for Low Back Pain.***  
French, SD; Cameron, M; Walker, BF;  
Reggars, JW; Esterman, AJ. Spine  
(ISSN: 0362-2436); Volume 31, No.  
9, pp. 998-1006; 2006

***Clinical Course and Impact of Fear-  
Avoidance Beliefs in Low Back  
Pain: Prospective Cohort Study of  
Acute and Chronic Low Back Pain.***  
Il. Grotie, M; Vollestad, NK; Brox, JI.  
Spine (ISSN: 0362-2436); Volume 31,  
No. 9, pp. 1038-1046; 2006

***Minimal Clinically Important  
Change for Pain Intensity,  
Functional Status, and General  
Health Status in Patients With  
Nonspecific Low Back Pain.***  
vanderRoer, N; Ostelo, RWJG;  
Bekkering, GE; vanTulder, MW;  
deVet, HCW. Spine 2006  
31 5 578-582

## Did you know ?

That Rehabilitation Case Managers  
and Workplace Rehabilitation Co-  
ordinators are welcome to attend our  
weekly Friday Team Meeting at 8 am.  
It's a great opportunity to meet with  
our professional team and discuss  
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