

RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

Issue 1, October 2006

Welcome to the first issue of the new BackCare Research Newsletter. My name is Dries Hettinga and I am the new Research and Information manager at BackCare. One of my responsibilities will be compiling a quarterly research newsletter for BackCare's professional members. The aim of this newsletter is to give you a quick and light-hearted overview of the latest research and developments in the world of back pain prevention and treatment. The plan is to keep the items short and concise but provide links to sites with more information. Any comments or suggestions for this newsletter should be sent to Dries@backcare.org.uk

New Guidelines on Exercise and Manual Therapy for LBP

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy is about to publish new evidence based guidelines on the use of exercise interventions and manual therapy for persistent LBP. Although this guideline was developed with physiotherapists in mind, the content of the guideline will also be relevant to other health care professionals and patients. The guideline uses the latest research evidence and an expert consensus group (which included a BackCare representative) to fill in the gaps in the research evidence. The main message of the guideline is that exercise should be included in all treatments for LBP and can be complemented with other interventions such as manual therapy. The guidelines are available from the [CSP](#).

Complementary Therapies for Back Pain; Do we now know more than in 2000?

Prof Edzard Ernst and colleagues are about to publish another thought provoking article titled 'Complementary therapies for back pain: is the evidence getting stronger?' The research team in Exeter compared two systematic reviews with similar methodology, one was published in 2000 and a second one in 2005. It appears that the evidence base is growing and remains encouraging but not fully convincing. The full article is available online before (printed) publication in [Clinical Rheumatology](#).

Exercise for LBP

Although published some time ago (May 2005), the systematic review on exercise for LBP by Hayden and colleagues remains an absolute pearl. Their first publication is a 'standard' systematic review, but their sub-analysis published in the same issue of Annals of Internal medicine, is a good attempt to

extract detailed information on the most effective exercise intervention for LBP. As we know, exercise programmes are good, but especially if consists of individually designed, supervised exercises that include stretching and strengthening. Both publications are available for free on the Ann Intern Med website: [full systematic review](#), [sub-analysis](#)

Who said reading Medical Journals can't be Fun?

Are you also struggling in keeping up with all your weekly reading? Why not read Dr Richard Lehman's weekly journal watch. Dr Lehman is a GP with a good sense of humour and comments on the main medical journals (JAMA, BMJ, NEJM, Lancet). It's an easy and often funny way of finding out if the journals have published anything of interest to you. See:

<http://www.primarycare.ox.ac.uk/journalwatch>

Disc Degeneration or a Consequence of Aging?

Like so many things in life, intervertebral discs change with advancing age. But how do we distinguish 'healthy aging' and normal adaptations of the intervertebral disc from pathological degeneration? To date, definitions are messy and this has impaired research in this area. Adams and Roughley are now proposing a working definition of disc degeneration: an aberrant cell-mediated response to progressive structural failure. This article has already resulted in a lively debate and hopefully the end product is a widely accepted definition of disc degeneration. See: [Spine 2006;31\(18\):2151-61](#).

New NICE Guideline

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has started work on a guideline for

Disclaimer: the content of this newsletter does not necessarily represent the views of BackCare. It aims to point readers to the latest research and development and readers are requested to use their own judgement to assess the validity and reliability of the information provided. BackCare is not responsible for the content of external websites or other sources of information.

BackCare, 16 Elmtree Road, Teddington, TW11 8ST tel: 020 8977 5474 web: www.backcare.org.uk

chronic low back pain. The remit of this guideline is to provide guidance for the acute management of patients with chronic (>6 weeks) low back pain and to include indications for referral and pathways of care. BackCare is a registered stakeholder in this project and progress can be followed on the [NICE website](#).

Protecting Young Backs

This year's BackCare Awareness Week (16-20 October) is centred around the BackCare Campaign 'Protecting Young Backs'. The message that standard school furniture and heavy backpacks are damaging the backs of a considerable number of school children is gathering momentum. It is now waiting for the Jamie Oliver effect. More details on the campaign can be found on http://www.backpain.org/pages/p_pages/pyb-menu.php Also, if you want to get involved in any events for this campaign, please contact the co-ordinator of this year's Awareness Week: barry@backcare.org.uk

The Truth behind the Headlines

Many of you will receive regular questions from patients on 'A new revolutionary therapy' or 'The definitive solution for back pain' that they read about in tabloids and other less reliable publications. Understandably these papers are keen on big headlines and in the process to come up with these headlines, they often drift away from the original sources. The National Library for Health, in collaboration with the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, has a 'Hitting the Headlines' service in which they discuss the scientific evidence behind recent headlines, see <http://www.library.nhs.uk/rss/>

More Exercise for LBP

All guidelines agree that exercise and/or an active life style should be an important element of any back pain management programme. The health and fitness industry has picked this up and is now in the process of defining national occupational standards for exercise professionals working with persons with back pain. These will be published by Skills Active later this year, see: <http://www.skillsactive.com/>

Restless Leg Syndrome

Lately, the BackCare Helpline has received a number of queries on Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS). The cause of this neurological condition is still unknown and at the present no

single diagnostic test is available. This makes RLS a difficult condition for patients and clinicians, some even doubt its existence. Some medication can bring relief but general prevention rules seem to be just as important. For more information on RLS see [Bandolier](#)

BackCare Research Funding

At their last meeting, BackCare's Research Committee has awarded funding to the following projects:

- Pinus, T. Responsiveness and construct validity of the Depression, Anxiety and Positive Outlook Scale (DAPOS).
- Barker, K. Multidisciplinary rehabilitation for chronic low back pain – five year follow-up of a randomised controlled trial.
- Hoyland, J. Testing the efficacy of differentiated adult stem cells to repopulate the human degenerate intervertebral disc in a loaded environment.

Back Pain Conferences and Events

- A Back Pain Service: Current Approaches. A one-day conference organised by the Royal Society of Medicine and the British Institute of Musculoskeletal Medicine. Bristol, 5 October. <http://www.rsm.ac.uk/academ/ZO-backpain.htm>
- BackCare Awareness Week, 16-20 October. http://www.backpain.org/pages/b_pages/bcd-menu.php
- Annual General Meeting of The Society for Back Pain Research. A two-day conference organised by the SBPR. Guisborough, North Yorkshire, 2-3 November 2006. <http://www.sbpr.info/meetings.php>
- Celebrating Advances in Pain Relief Research: 30 Years on from the Discovery of Enkephalins. Edinburgh, 11-12 December 2006. <http://www.advancesinpainresearch.co.uk/index.html>

Future Items for this Newsletter

Please email any research, projects, conferences, meetings or other items that you would like to see included in the next BackCare Research Newsletter to Dries@backcare.org.uk