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Special Edition

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Patient information for low back and/or spinal related leg pain: creation of a local online resource

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Background

It is estimated that over 102,000 individuals in Cornwall live with low back pain (LBP). This equates to 19% of the total population and is above the overall prevalence in England of 16.9%. Approximately 20% of people with low back pain consult their primary care team which poses a large burden on the health and social care system (Murray et al., 2013). Maine et al. (2010) highlights that, unhelpful beliefs related to LBP are associated with greater levels of pain, disability, work absenteeism, and higher medication and healthcare utilisation. Such beliefs are common across the population and can be reinforced by the media, industry groups and well-meaning clinicians (O'Sullivan et al., 2020). Public and patient education is therefore important. Locally there is no standardised patient information resources for individuals with LBP and/or spinal related leg pain.

Review of the evidence

A structured literature search was conducted using the Google Scholar database. Key words used were: Low Back Pain, Sciatica, Radicular Leg Pain, Primary Care AND Patient Education. A recent systematic review by Zahari et al. (2019) had included studies up to 2016, therefore, years 2015 to 2022 were searched. Titles were reviewed and papers deemed most relevant were selected and abstracts read (n=22). Nine papers were chosen for full appraisal. Reference lists were reviewed for further papers of interest, but none were found. The literature review found that the use of LBP educational resources is an effective way to reinforce key clinical messages and help support self-management (Zahari et al., 2019). In addition, evidence suggests such resources can help address unhelpful beliefs identified by Maine et al. (2010), therefore helping to reduce unnecessary use of health resources, improve work absenteeism and fulfil patient preference for clear and consistent information (Zahari et al., 2019). A growing solution has seen developments in web-based resources from providers nationally and internationally (Geraghty et al., 2020, Hodges et al., 2020).

Project plan

The aim of this project is to create a local website with a library of high-quality information regarding LBP and/or spinal related leg pain. This project is underpinned by the JBI Evidence implementation model (Porritt et al., 2020). Key stakeholders were identified using a mapping process, with presentations delivered to these groups that includes service managers and senior clinicians. A survey has been developed to understand current patient and clinician behaviours regarding use of information to inform the change project. It is hoped that this resource will be used to reinforce aspects of the clinical consultation and support self-management. The change will be re-evaluated after a period of promotion and use.

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