




RECOVERY: What does this mean to patients with low back pain?

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Background


- Has my patient recovered?
 - Simple for some musculoskeletal conditions
 - Complex for LBP
- Definitions of recovery
 - No universal definition
 - Systematic review: 65 different definitions
(Kamper, Stanton, Maher, Williams, Hush, 2009)




What does recovery mean?



Need to establish content validity




Consult patients for their perspectives
on recovery




Aim


To investigate patients' views of recovery
from low back pain.




Methods

- 36 Participants with non-specific LBP were interviewed in 8 focus groups.
- Each focus group was of 2 hours duration.






Participants



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      graph TD
        A[N = 36] --> B[Recovered  
N = 11]
        A --> C[Unrecovered  
N = 25]
    
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- All working
- Mean age: 41 years (range 31 to 59)
- 58% male



Interview topic guide

Type of question	Example
Introductory	Can you briefly introduce yourself to the group? Please tell me about your back condition.
Regarding recovery	Do you see yourself as having recovered from your back condition? How did you know you had recovered? What had changed?
If 'yes' (recovered)	What would have to change for you to consider yourself recovered?
If 'no' (unrecovered)	If you think recovery isn't possible, what could be better?
Closing	Is there anything else you would like to add?



Interview data

- Audio-recorded and transcribed
- Transcripts examined to identify and code themes
- Framework analysis used to chart domains and themes and interpret the data



Pain and Disability Measures

Numerical Rating Scale



24-item RMDQ

- I stay at home most of the time because of my back.
- I change positions frequently to try to get my back comfortable.
- I walk more slowly than usual because of my back.
- Because of my back, I am not doing any jobs that I usually do around the house.
- Because of my back, I use a handrail to get upstairs.
- Because of my back, I lie down to rest more often.
- Because of my back, I have to hold on to something to get out of the way chair.
- Because of my back, I try to get other people to do things for me.
- I get dressed more slowly than usual because of my back.
- I only stand up for short periods of time because of my back.
- Because of my back, I try not to bend or kneel down.
- I find it difficult to get out of a chair because of my back.
- My back is painful almost all of the time.
- I find it difficult to turn over in bed because of my back.
- My appetite is not very good because of my back.
- I have trouble putting on my sock (or stocking) because of the pain in my back.
- I can only walk short distances because of my back pain.
- I sleep less well because of my back.
- Because of my back pain, I get dressed with the help of someone else.
- I sit down for most of the day because of my back.
- I avoid heavy jobs around the house because of my back.
- Because of back pain, I am more careful and had to interrupt with people than usual.
- Because of my back, I go upstairs more slowly than usual.
- I stay in bed more of the time because of my back.



Results

Recovery from back pain encompasses 3 dimensions:

1. symptom attenuation
2. improved function
3. achievement of an acceptable QOL



Symptom attenuation

- Attenuation of back or leg symptoms was a marker of recovery
- However, symptom resolution was not a prerequisite for recovery
 - Only 2 of the 36 participants stated recovery would mean “zero pain”
 - Several stated they could consider themselves recovered if they still had pain



Illustrative quote

“ I don't visualise a 'zero' of pain. There are good days and if I have a 'two' or 'three', I'm fine, I'm more than happy with that... all you do is try and manage your pain and try to live with that. It's the better quality of life you are having: that's it.”



Symptom attenuation

- 36% of those who rated themselves as recovered had pain scores ≥ 1
- 37% of those who rated themselves as unrecovered had pain scores ≤ 1

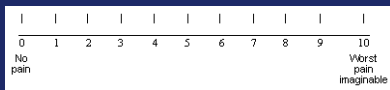


Illustrative quote

“I’m still careful about some things I do... being careful just managing the potential for pain, because I don’t have back pain but I am careful about what I do.”



Pain scores and recovery

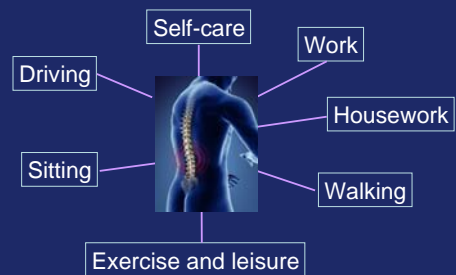


A low pain score does not clearly distinguish those recovered from those unrecovered.



Improved function

Broad scope of functional domains



Illustrative quotes

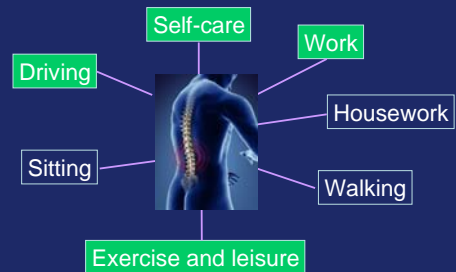
“I’d know I’m better when I can put on my shoes and socks without my back hurting.”

“That (recovery) would mean I could do a job where I bend all day and know the next day I could still do it.”



Improved function

Domains not assessed in RMDQ or Oswestry



Acceptable quality of life

- **Social factors**
 - Capacity to socialise with family and friends
 - Independence: not reliant on others for help
- **Sleep**
 - Normal pattern of sleep
- **Physical health**
 - Less fatigue
 - Capacity for normal mobility
- **Psychological health**
 - Positive cognitions about function and physical capacity

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Illustrative quote

“If I could do all the things I value... running around the backyard with my kids... I would say I was fully recovered”

bprg

Illustrative quote

“To be recovered I would be able to do whatever I wanted to do without having to think [about how to avoid pain aggravation].”

bprg

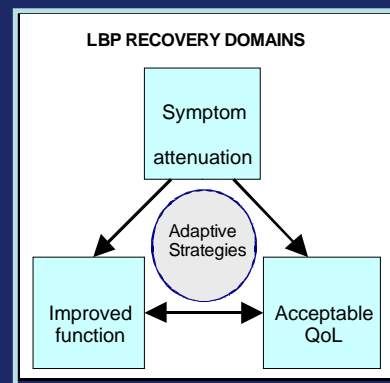
Discussion

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Recovery: the patients' perspective

- Recovery is determined not only by symptom attenuation but also by cognitive appraisal of the impact of symptoms on the capacity to perform meaningful functional activities and achievement of an acceptable quality of life.
- Findings align with IMMPACT patient survey (Turk, 2008)

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Adaptive Strategies

- Cognitive and behavioural
- Used to reduce the risk of recurrence or to adapt to living with LBP.
- Examples:
 - changing how activities are performed
 - pragmatic acceptance of pain



Recovery from back pain

- Is a complex and highly individual construct.
- This study provides empirical data from patients about which domains are most meaningful for their recovery.



Forum theme 1

What are the outcomes of LBP and how do they inter-relate?



The Team

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Hush et al. Recovery: what does this mean to patients with low back pain?
Arthritis & Rheumatism-Arthritis Care & Research 2009; 61: 124-131.



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