



## NEWS & RESOURCES

### March 2016 (5)

---

*Programme update*

#### **Patients are now on the pathway in South Tees, Hambleton Richmondshire and Whitby, Hartlepool, Stockton-on-Tees and Darlington**

The acute back pain pathway was rolled out for patients in South Tees and Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby areas from July last year – as early implementer sites for the pathway. We continue to learn from their experience adjusting any elements that aren't working well. The next implementer sites are NHS Darlington and Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees CCGs and now everything is in place to support local GPs in helping manage patients with a new episode of back pain in line with the pathway. Discussions are now taking place about the next wave of CCGs to implement in the North East and Cumbria. The next implementing sites are expected to adopt the pathway in August 2016. Learning and evaluation from all these early sites will inform how best to implement the pathway in the remaining CCGS by March 2019.

#### **What's new about the pathway?**

In the early implementer sites, patients who have failed to improve sufficiently with interventions and support earlier in the acute back pain pathway, are now able to be referred by their Spinal physiotherapist to the 3 week Combined Physical and Psychological Programme (CPPP) which began taking its first group of patients in January. This element is part of the recommendations in NICE guidance that up until now has not been available to patients in the North East. The third course is now running. Outcomes from the CPPP are being monitored as part of the overall evaluation of the pathway. More information on the CPPP is available on the [website](#).

---

*Key facts – low back pain*

#### **X-rays don't help**

Growing evidence says X-rays and MRI imaging in most back pain does not help in patient management and may actually do more harm. Plain X-rays for low back pain are nearly always not needed and patients end up getting an unnecessary dose of radiation (150 times that of a chest X-ray). X-rays should only be asked for if there is a suspected traumatic or osteoporotic fracture.

## MRIs often make no difference to a patient's treatment

Unless there are red flags present when MRI is the investigation of choice, MRI findings can often have little or no effect on a patient's symptoms or treatment – it can also makes them anxious about findings that may not be clinically relevant and can then result in pressings their doctor for further action including unnecessary referral. A recent review<sup>1</sup> showed that imaging can often lead to unnecessary treatment or surgery and the patient is more likely to develop chronic symptoms.

<sup>1</sup> BMJ 2014;349:g4266

Deyo, Jarvik & Chou (2014). Rational imaging - low back pain in primary care. British Medical Journal; available from <http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/fohs/communityhealth/Family/Documents/Low%20back%20pain%20in%20primary%20care.pdf>

---

### Clinical

#### Referrals: Emergency, same day to spinal unit:

For

- Suspected Cauda equina
- Suspected spinal infection where there are systemic signs of infection together with severe back pain
- Significant new or progressive neurological deficit

---

### Resources

#### [www.NoEbackpainprogramme.nhs.uk](http://www.NoEbackpainprogramme.nhs.uk) – the new website

What's available now:

- For the full version of the [Interactive Pathway](#)
- Frequently asked questions, such as does the pathway reduce the need for surgery (yes it does)?
- For information about the benefits of the Combined Physical and Psychological Programme implemented in South Tees ([CPPP](#))
- [Useful training materials](#) and [patient information](#) to help patients manage their back pain
- Materials to help raise public awareness of self-management

---

### Resources



## Back pain becomes social @NoEBackpain

A social media campaign to deliver key messages about back pain will happen with wave one in the three areas in March and April. Look for the hashtags **#factsaboutbacks** and **#justhurmyback** and the [golden rules](#) for back pain.

Materials for the campaign are available from [www.noebackpainprogramme.nhs.uk](http://www.noebackpainprogramme.nhs.uk).

 Follow @NoEBackPain

People are being asked to re-tweet and promote these messages through their own social media accounts from March 2016 onwards.

---

## Find out more about the programme

For further information about the programme, contact [project.rbpp@nhs.net](mailto:project.rbpp@nhs.net).

Clinical Commissioning Groups across the North East and Cumbria, Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby Clinical Commissioning Group and South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

