

ANZMUSC and COCA

PhD RESEARCH PROJECT TOPIC SUBMISSION

Complete all sections or indicate 'same as above' where applicable.

Project title:	HELP - A healthy lifestyle program for patients with chronic low back pain	
Primary Supervisor (s)	Christopher Williams, Steven Kamper	
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Project description: In 200-250 words (or less), please provide a synopsis of the project, highlighting the main features of the project (including the potential research question, aim, rationale).	<p>A substantial proportion of people with chronic back pain also report other health problems such as overweight, smoking and low levels of physical activity. However, clinical care for these people focuses narrowly on their back pain. Rarely do these people receive care that also addresses these other factors. This is significant because they are indicators of poor overall health, risk factors for chronic disease, and prognostic factors for poor outcome from back pain. Failure to address these factors when treating people with back pain potentially leads to suboptimal clinical outcomes, and also misses an opportunity to target an at-risk population with important lifestyle advice.</p> <p>There are current models of care for treating back pain and lifestyle-related risk factors, but at present no mechanism for linking these existing services. This study will randomise overweight people with chronic low back pain to either an integrated care package (clinical care for back pain plus healthy lifestyle program), or care based on clinical practice guidelines for management of back pain. A key feature of the intervention is an education module that links back pain to general, lifestyle-related health risk factors. Our pilot work showed that this led to greatly increased rates of uptake of the healthy lifestyle program, compared to usual GP referral. The research question is: Does adding a healthy lifestyle program to clinical care improve outcome in people with chronic low back pain.</p>	

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<p>Methodological approach: In 200-250 words (or less) describe the main methodological approach to be undertaken (quantitative or qualitative). Also detail the proposed type of data collection the student will be required to undertake. If the project uses existing data, clarify how this project will be unique.</p>	<p>HELP is a NHMRC-funded RCT due to begin recruitment in February 2017. The project will evaluate adding optimised and contextualised referral to a healthy lifestyle support program to evidence-based care for back pain. The intervention group will receive guideline-based education, reassurance and advice for back pain, and referral to the 'Get Healthy' program. They will also receive explanation of how unhealthy lifestyle factors such as overweight, smoking, drinking and physical activity can influence and interact with their pain and disability. Get Healthy is a government funded program that is aimed at reducing weight through healthy lifestyle, it is delivered by trained health coaches via the telephone. Subjects in the control group will receive guideline-based for back pain, as in the intervention group. Participants will be recruited from the waiting orthopaedic and neurosurgery waiting lists at John Hunter hospital in Newcastle. John Hunter hospital is the only tertiary referral hospital in the Hunter New England Local Health District, and as such receives all referrals for these services from the largest LHD in NSW. Analyses will be conducted by intention-to-treat on a sample of 346 people, allocation will be concealed and outcome assessors blind to group. The primary outcome is pain-related disability with between group differences tested bilinear mixed models over 12 month follow-up. A concurrent economic evaluation will be conducted.</p>
<p>Necessary skills/knowledge: Outline the main skills and knowledge the student will need to undertake the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic understanding of research methods • Flexibility with respect to working time • Time management skills • Some experience with academic writing
<p>Ethics Approval (please tick appropriate answer)</p>	<p>Yes ____ No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ____ If No: date of expected submission __Nov 2016__</p>
<p>Main site of project</p>	
<p>Number of students supervised to completion by supervisor (s)</p>	<p>Supervisor 1: <u> 1 </u> Supervisor 2 <u> 0 </u> Supervisor 3 <u> 37 </u></p>
<p>Supervisors Availability [hours pw]</p>	<p>Williams: 4, Kamper: 4</p>
<p>A/Supervisors availability [hours per week]</p>	<p>Maher: 1</p>
<p>Research Timeframe:</p>	<p>Begin January 2017</p>