



Musculoskeletal
Association of
Chartered
Physiotherapists



MACP Elsevier Research Award 2023 report

Project

Thank you to the **MACP** and **Elsevier** for the £5,000 research award which has enabled Chris Horler to work with Professor Geraldine Leydon and myself to complete an important study into safety-netting communication within physiotherapy consultations.

Safety netting involves the communication of information to patients about what symptoms they should monitor and when, why or how they should seek further help if their condition worsens (Jones et al 2019). Whilst it is recognised as an essential component of physiotherapy practice and recommended within national and international guidelines, there is a lack of research investigating safety netting within physiotherapy practice (Greenhalgh et al 2020).

This MACP and Elsevier award enabled us to conduct a research project to investigate how safety-netting is used within musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice. With ethical approval from the University of Southampton (ERGO 80983), we completed a secondary analysis of audio-recorded physiotherapy consultations for people with low back pain in a musculoskeletal outpatient primary care setting. We used the Safety-Netting Coding Tool (Edwards et al 2019), that has been validated in a primary care context to identify and analyse the safety netting communication that took place during 41 initial and 38 follow-up consultations, involving 12 physiotherapists and 41 patients with low back pain.

Our findings provide a novel insight into how safety-netting information is communicated in physiotherapy consultations for patients with low back pain, resulting in recommendations for physiotherapists to reflect and develop their communication skills in clinical practice, in particular focussing on how clinical diagnoses are discussed and care episodes planned. Our findings will be presented at the International Federation of Orthopaedic Manipulative Physical Therapists (IFOMPT) Conference in July 2024. We have also written an abstract to be presented at Physiotherapy UK conference in October 2024 and an article to be submitted to an international peer-reviewed journal. In addition, the findings and clinical recommendations will be shared within an international webinar for EUROSPINE on the topic of effective communication for patients in June 2024. Therefore, the findings from this paper will be disseminated to a wide clinical and academic audience to facilitate clinical implementation and impact on patient care. Another key outcome from this project is that it has enabled us to pilot the Safety-Netting Coding Tool in a physiotherapy context which will enable Chris to build on this work within his planned PhD research within the field of safety netting. Throughout these dissemination activities, the generous support of the MACP and Elsevier is acknowledged.

Expenditure

As illustrated in Table 1, most of the funding was used to backfill Chris Horler's clinical time to enable him to conduct the study, analyse the data and write the abstracts and an article currently in final draft, for submission to *Musculoskeletal Science and Practice*. The funding enabled Chris to meet with Geraldine and myself regularly to discuss the project, analyse the data and plan the content and delivery of the dissemination activities. Furthermore, Chris was able to use the funding as planned

to hold an online Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) meeting with five people, which provided valuable insight from the lay perspective during the data analysis process. Members of the PPIE group received a thank you voucher in line with guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (2022). Finally, the remaining funds will contribute to disseminating the findings at PhysioUK 2024 in Manchester (abstract outcome pending).

Professor Lisa Roberts (working with Chris Horler and Professor Geraldine Leydon)
17.04.2024

Table 1: Expenditure

Cost	Reason
£4,469.11	Backfill cost for CH time to complete the study
£147.35	CH car travel and parking costs for a meeting with supervisors for data analysis (45p a mile)
£125	PPIE consultation meeting for data analysis. 1-hour virtual meeting with 5 people, each given a £25 voucher in line with NIHR PPIE guidance.
£26.35	IFOMPT conference abstract fee to present findings in July 2024.
£23.49	Estimated cost for printing poster for IFOMPT conference to present findings.
£119	Physiotherapy UK 2024 conference registration to present findings in October 2024.
£89.70	Remaining money will be used for travel/hotel stay for Physio UK conference to present findings.

References

Edwards, P.J., Ridd, M.J., Sanderson, E. and Barnes, R.K., 2019. Development of a tool for coding safety-netting behaviours in primary care: a mixed-methods study using existing UK consultation recordings. *British journal of general practice*, 69(689), pp.e869-e877.

Greenhalgh, S., Finucane, L.M., Mercer, C. and Selfe, J., 2020. Safety netting; best practice in the face of uncertainty. *Musculoskeletal Science and Practice*, 48, p.102179.

Jones, D., Dunn, L., Watt, I. and Macleod, U., 2019. Safety netting for primary care: evidence from a literature review. *British Journal of General Practice*, 69(678), pp.e70-e79.

National Institute for Health and Care Research. 2022. *Payment guidance for researchers and professionals*. Available from: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-researchers-and-professionals/27392> [Accessed 16 April 2024].