

LIMBIC: Learning to Improve the Management of Back Pain in the Community

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What we did

A series of eight workshops with nine practice teams included GPs, practice nurses, physiotherapists, managers, admin staff and patients. They shared evidence about back pain and improvement knowledge, exchanged ideas, developed improvement plans, and heard patients tell their own stories. The presence of patients on the teams made sure that the improvement plans were patient-focused. Practices used a range of improvement tools such as PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) cycles, process maps and patient stories, and they all used a wiki (online communication tool) to share their ideas and progress. A Quality Improvement Facilitator provided support for the practice teams in between the workshops.

Things that we've learnt

- Initially challenging and daunting, involving patients was interesting and fun and it led to people thinking differently
- Practice teams recognised the value of user involvement, the benefits of shared working and interprofessional learning
- Improvements were around patient information processes, referral to physiotherapy and reduction of 'did not attend' (DNAs)
- We need to produce information that is clearly understood by patients.

Outcomes of the project

- GPs now consult differently, focusing more on self-management and less on intervention
- Patients found it an enlightening experience
- Small changes can make a big difference for patients and healthcare teams
- Improvements can be made possible by patient involvement, practice-based support, interprofessional learning, making the effort to find the time, and coupling subject knowledge and evidence with improvement knowledge
- Patients are still engaged – presenting at conferences, co-writing bids and presenting at master classes.

Key messages

- Placing patients as service users at the heart of interprofessional learning is powerful in shifting attitudes
- By coupling subject knowledge with improvement knowledge it is possible to improve professionals' sense of competence and confidence.

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