

## **Western University School of Physical Therapy Spinal Pain Research Lab**

### **Background of the lab**

The Spinal Pain Research Lab is led by Dr. Alison Rushton, Director and Professor of the School of Physical Therapy at Western University. Research lab members consist of one additional faculty member in the School of Physical Therapy, two research associates and numerous graduate students. The research lab is located at Elborn College on the Western University campus and Victoria Hospital. The research program has a focus on precision rehabilitation interventions for managing spinal pain to enable effective and efficient care and enhance patient outcomes.

### **Overview of patient partner engagement**

An important component of our research program is engaging and collaborating with a diverse group of people who have previously or currently are experiencing pain in one or more parts of their spine (low back, mid back, neck). We are creating a patient partner advisory group to guide and assist us in our research program focused on precision rehabilitation interventions for managing spinal pain.

Within the advisory group we will create committees to inform specific projects. For example, if we have a research project focused on Physical Therapy interventions for low back pain, we will create a committee consisting of patient partners who have experience with Physical Therapy for low back pain. We will also have committees to advise, guide and assist us in quality improvement projects and public communication activities.

Our goal is to create an inclusive environment within our research program, which includes our patient partner advisory group. Patient partners will actively collaborate with members of the research team to ensure our projects are meaningful and meet the needs of people who have pain in their low back, mid back or neck. We value and welcome all voices when working together to enhance precision rehabilitation interventions for managing spinal pain.

### **Objectives for patient partner engagement**

1. Actively contribute to our research program, from project development to dissemination of results, ensuring the patient's voice informs all that we do
2. Ensure our quality improvement initiatives and public communication meet the needs of patients and the community

### **Criteria for involvement**

People who have lived experiences with low back, mid back, or neck pain of any kind. We will have numerous research projects related to different parts of the spine (low back, mid back, neck) and we would like to have partners engage in projects in which they have lived experiences. We will also have research projects related to different types of interventions for people with back or neck pain, such as physical therapy or surgery. Therefore, we are interested in patient partners who also have experiences in physical therapy and/or surgery for low back, mid back or neck pain.

**Number of partners**

With time, we intend to build our patient partner advisory group to consist of approximately 30 people. Within the pool of 30, we will create committees to advise, guide and assist us on specific research and quality improvement projects, and public communication activities. We anticipate each committee will consist of approximately 10 patient partners.

**Anticipated time commitments**

As we intend the patient partner advisory group to assist and guide our program of research, we prefer long term engagement with our patient partners. Ideally, our partners will work with us for one year. However, we recognize unforeseeable events happen in life and therefore will not mandate a one-year commitment. Similarly, our vision of creating a community of patient partners may lead to the desire for engagement longer than one year, which we are equally happy to accommodate.

**Start date**

We are looking to build our patient partner advisory group as soon as possible. We will continue to welcome new engagement with our advisory group until we reach our desired target of approximately 30 patient partners with a wide range of experiences with pain in the spine region (low back, mid back, neck, physical therapy, surgery, etc).

**Inaugural meeting**

Our inaugural kickoff patient partner advisory group meeting will occur on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 in Elborn College on the Western University campus. The meeting will begin at 4:30pm with refreshments and the formal meeting will start at 5pm. We will provide parking at Elborn College for this meeting, and we are able to cover the cost of transportation if needed. If needed, we can host a hybrid meeting where patient partners join us via Zoom if they prefer or cannot attend in-person.

During the inaugural meeting, we will introduce the research team and give an overview of our research program. Following methods used in the TV show Shark Tank, researchers will pitch research project ideas to the patient partner advisory group. Following each presentation, the advisory group will provide feedback to improve projects and ensure we are researching topics that are meaningful and matter to people with pain in their low back, mid back or neck.

**Ongoing meetings**

Following the inaugural kickoff meeting, future meetings will be scheduled every couple of months. Meetings will generally last a couple of hours. As public health measures allow, we will continue to host in-person meetings at Elborn College on the Western University campus with the option for people to join virtually as needed or desired.

**COVID safety measures**

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**Compensation**

For the inaugural meeting, we will provide compensation in the form of a gift card. At this point in time, we are unable to provide further financial or other compensation for patient partners. If any patient advisory group activities occur on the Western University campus or at Victoria Hospital, we will continue to provide parking and / or costs of transportation.

We will be submitting a grant to support our research and within that grant we are including compensation for our patient partners. As our advisory group will be longer term, we anticipate compensation based on project involvement.

**Anticipated outcomes**

Our goal is to enhance patient outcomes through effective and efficient precision rehabilitation interventions. To achieve this research mission, our long-term patient partner advisory group will guide and assist us through the entire lifecycle of research, quality improvement projects and public communication activities. This shared creation of projects, processes and communication will ensure our research program is meaningful and meets the needs of people who have pain in their low back, mid back and neck.

If you have any questions, would like more information or are interested in joining, please contact either:

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