



## Service Priorities and Programmes Electronic Presentations

**Convention ID:** 999

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### **Adoption of STarT Back Approach in Back Pain Management in Hong Kong: From Incubation to Implementation**

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#### **Keywords:**

STarT

Screening tool

Back Pain

Physiotherapy

Training

Biopsychosocial model

#### **Introduction**

STarT (Subgroup for Targeted Treatment) Back Approach is a stratified care approach for non-specific back pain patients. It consists of STarT Back Screening Tool (validated Chinese version) to stratify patients into high, medium and low risk levels with subsequent care by matched treatment pathways. The approach was shown to have clinical and financial benefits in the United Kingdom (UK).

#### **Objectives**

To develop a preparatory pathway to adopt the STarT Back Approach to manage large volume of non-urgent non-specific back pain patients attending Out-patient Physiotherapy clinics in Hong Kong setting.

#### **Methodology**

**Training:** In Oct 2015, Physiotherapy (PT) Department of United Christian Hospital (UCH) supported and facilitate a physiotherapist to attend a 5-day lecture and workshop on STarT Back Approach and "The Biopsychosocial Management of Complex Low Back Pain" at Keele University in UK. After this overseas training, the trained physiotherapist delivered in-service training to fellow physiotherapy colleagues in UCH, sharing forum to physiotherapists in other Hospital Authority hospitals, and presentations to other medical professions at Annual Scientific Meeting co-organized by Hong Kong Pain Society and Department of Orthopaedics & Traumatology of Chinese University of Hong Kong.

**Implementation:** A pilot study using STarT Back Approach to manage back pain patients started in PT department of UCH in January 2016. Patients with back pain in the STarT Back group were given a first screening session conducted by trained and experienced physiotherapists. The session included basic musculoskeletal assessment, group educational video, group exercises and call help (SOS) follow up. Patients with back pain in the control group were treated by conventional biomedical

approach.

Facilitation: To facilitate the arrangement and operation for the first screening session, educational materials such as exercise leaflets and video, instructions for clerks and artisans, and logistics for therapists were prepared.

Evaluation: Physiotherapists participating in the study were evaluated for their understanding of the STarT Back Approach and their satisfaction in the running of the program. The effectiveness of the first screening session on patient discharge was reviewed and the patients' overall satisfaction of the program was evaluated.

### **Result**

Physiotherapist had good knowledge on the STarT Back Approach as well as the communication skills were involved in the program delivery. They provided positive feedbacks on the facilitation of smooth running of the approach.

Conclusion:

The successful adoption of the STarT Back Approach in local physiotherapy out-patient setting required support from senior management, good preparation of materials for patient and staff, promotion of new approach to local physiotherapists and stakeholders.