

# The Self-Management Navigator Tool

## Pilot evaluation of a novel tool to enhance communication in consultations about chronic pain



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### Introduction

Chronic pain is estimated to affect around 40% of the UK's population<sup>1</sup>. There is generally no cure for chronic pain and many people live with the condition for years, with it affecting many areas of life. Self-management has been highlighted as an important treatment strategy, and yet there are multiple barriers to self-management being supported in primary care.

### What is the Navigator Tool?

It trains healthcare professionals (HCPs) in supported self-management and prepares the patient to raise their concerns and questions at primary care appointments. The patient receives the self-management Navigator Tool document which contains questions and information.

### Research question

Does the Navigator Tool intervention improve communication regarding self-management during consultations between HCPs and people with pain in primary care?

### Methodology

Randomised controlled trial. Patients randomised to intervention or control group. Intervention group received tool and was prompted to see their healthcare professional 2-3 times over 3 months. Control group was not given the tool and was prompted to see their HCP as they normally would. Mixed methods data collection through interviews, questionnaires (PSEQ, CQI-2 and SDM-9Q) and feedback forms.

“From a medical perspective we've got to work reasonably hard to help patients to understand that there's a psychological element to pain, just simple concepts like that are hard to get across some times. But I think the tool quite effectively did that on its own.” – GP

It enabled me to think through what I actually wanted to discuss at the appointment. Also in looking through my completed forms with the GP it helped us both see what my concerns were.” – Patient

### What did we find?

The tool was shown to facilitate four important aspects of communication in consultations about chronic pain:

- Enable patients and HCPs to see a more holistic picture of the pain;
- Lead to engaged efficient consultations;
- Highlight a range of self-management strategies; and
- Facilitate positive emotions.

### Practical use

The interviews suggested that HCPs used the tool in flexible and creative ways, according to the specific needs of their patients. Respondents reported that the tool was largely easy to use in daily practice.

Navigator Tool – concerns form to accompany Part 1

#### My pain concerns form

Read each statement and tick either 'agree' or 'disagree' as to whether this is something you would like to talk to your health-care professional about.

Diagnosis and cure	Agree	Disagree	The way I'm feeling	Agree	Disagree
I don't think enough has been done to find out what is wrong.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel frustrated or embarrassed that I can't do the things I used to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't know the cause of this condition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel in a low mood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't understand my diagnosis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel stressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My pain is not getting any better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel that people are judging me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My pain is getting worse.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel lonely and isolated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please write below).			Other (please write below).		

  

Changes to my life	Agree	Disagree	My medications	Agree	Disagree
I don't see my family and friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am concerned about the amount of medication I'm taking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can't continue in or return to work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am concerned about the combination of medications I'm taking.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can't do my usual day-to-day tasks at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am concerned about the side effects of the medication I am on.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can't get a good night's sleep.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am concerned that my medication does not help my pain.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can't do leisure activities that I used to enjoy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please write below).		
I have money worries.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Other (please write below).					

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### Next steps

The **My pain concerns form** was found to be the most useful component of the tool. It is now available on Pain Concern's website for HCPs and patients to use, alongside instructional videos that aid in understanding the ethos and practical issues around using it.

Further use of the tool, in real life consultations, will be encouraged, which will provide more information on its usability and practical benefits.