

Research Space

Conference poster

**Pool closures during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on
low back pain management**

Oakes, H., DeVivo, M., Stephensen, D. and Mills, H.

POOL CLOSURES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE IMPACT ON LOW BACK PAIN MANAGEMENT

Helen Oakes, Marlize De Vivo, David Stephensen, Hayley Mills



helenoakes@nhs.net



@OakesHelen

INTRODUCTION

On 23 March 2020 the UK Government announced a national lockdown to help reduce transmission of COVID-19; these measures involved closure of swimming pools. Pools were permitted to reopen in July, however, had to shut again during the second lockdown in November. Swimming is often recommended as a management tool for persistent low back pain (LBP)[1] therefore pool closures for extensive periods could negatively impact this group.

METHOD

Two studies were undertaken to explore the impact of pool closures on self-management of LBP. The first, an online survey of NHS patients with LBP (n=82), the second, semi-structured interviews with those who use swimming to manage LBP (n=14). The responses were analysed using thematic analysis.

References

[1] Nyska et al. (2000) *Int J of Sports Med* 21, 375-379, [2] Hussain et al. (2020) *Obes Res Clin Pract* 14, 295-300, [3] Hoy et al. (2014) *Ann Rheum Dis* 73, 968-974.

PHYSICAL



Pain, injury & flare-ups



Restarted medication



Weight gain



Less active & mobile

PSYCHOLOGICAL



Low mood



Loss of motivation



Loss of identity

SOCIAL



Loss of routine



Lack of social interaction



Lack of freedom

RETURNING TO THE POOL: CONCERNS AND PROBLEMS



Risk of catching COVID-19



New pool procedures



Pools not reopening

RESULTS

The majority of participants (78%) felt that pool closures impacted on the management of their LBP. Physically, participants reported experiencing more LBP or flare-ups, gaining weight, having to restart medication, sustaining injuries due to trying another form of exercise, being less active and less mobile. Psychological impacts included low mood, loss of motivation, and loss of identity whilst socially participants missed the routine and social interaction, and not having the freedom to swim.

CONCLUSION

It is recognised that managing a healthy weight and keeping active can reduce the severity and mortality of COVID-19[2], and help manage LBP. Since LBP is the number one cause of disability globally [3]; the impact of future pool closures on the ability for this group to keep active and manage their condition, should be considered.