

This is a brief update of progress on the Ambassador Program's practice guidelines for low back pain and headache.

- A videoconference was held in June 2006 with interested participants from Ambassador Program Phase I to share evaluation results and seek direction on Ambassador Program II.
- A presentation was made to the Regional Health Authority Council of CEOs in April 2007 on the results of Ambassador Program Phase I and plans for Ambassador Program II.
- A needs assessment survey was conducted of health professionals in Alberta to determine existing knowledge on treatment of low back pain and headache. The needs assessment survey was augmented with a search of the international literature on knowledge gaps in low back pain management. Results validated the need for guidelines.
- The HTA researchers reviewed published primary care clinical practice guidelines on non-specific low back pain. An assessment of the guidelines using the AGREE tool was done and tables produced of convergent and divergent recommendations and supporting evidence for the Working Committee.
- The Working Committee reviewed recommendations from the highest rated available guidelines to create guidelines suitable for Alberta. The activity involved monthly video conferences and subgroup work by teleconference. One-page and ten-page versions of the guidelines have been developed and validated by the Working Committee (Guideline Development Group). Details on the entire guideline's development process are in a 100-page background document that is near completion.
- The Guideline Development Group met with professional organizations and professional colleges in Alberta in November 2007. These professional bodies and Toward Optimized Practice (TOP) were asked to share guidelines they have endorsed or that they were considering for endorsement that might provide more information/contextualization to the Ambassador Program guidelines. For example, the College of Physicians and Surgeons will be launching an updated Opioid guideline in 2009.
- The professional organizations were also asked to endorse and/or support the Ambassador guidelines. Responses on endorsement ranged from receiving the guideline for interest only (because of regulatory powers) to providing a full approval of the guideline.
- The one-page version of the guideline (guideline summary) was piloted at the Pain Conference sponsored by Capital Health in April 2008. A summary of the survey results was shared with TOP and is available on the Ambassador website.
- All guideline documents were appraised using the AGREE tool by two representatives from the Institute for Work & Health and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. This work was completed January 2009.

- TOP is hosting the guidelines and will hold the legal and intellectual property rights. The guideline was posted on the TOP web site March 2009
http://www.topalbertadoctors.org/cpgs/back_pain.html
- TOP and IHE HTA researchers will be co-leads in scientific (content) updates to the guidelines. The HTA researchers are continuing to update the Evidence-in-Brief documents on the Ambassador website that has moved to <http://www.ihe.ca/research/ambassador-program/> .
- A dissemination and implementation plan for the guidelines has been developed and shared with stakeholder organizations including the Alberta Bone and Joint Initiative, Alberta Health and Wellness (Primary Care Networks), and Chronic Disease Programs in Edmonton and Calgary. The plan is designed to insure that primary care providers are receiving consistent messages from all provincial organizations supporting evidence-based low back care.
- The Steering Committee engaged a consultant to undertake a process evaluation before embarking on the development of guidelines for headaches.
- A survey of the Guideline Development Group has been completed on headache interventions. This is a starting point in the development of Evidence-in-Brief for headache and the next phase of the Ambassador Program.
- A research committee has been struck to develop and evaluate the KT strategy for the implementation of the guideline. A three-year grant from CIHR will support this research initiative.
- A pilot workshop (part of the Dissemination and Implementation strategy) was presented in December 2008 at the Calgary Chronic Pain conference. The workshop structure, content and delivery is being revised in response to that experience and input from an ad hoc planning committee that met on January 29, 2009.
- A manuscript on the low back pain recommendations and the guideline development process has been submitted to CMAJ and another will be submitted to Physiotherapy Canada in April.