Manual Therapy for Persistent or Chronic Non-Specific Back Pain: Clinical Effectiveness, Cost-Effectiveness and Guidelines
Authors: Shannon Hill, Suzanne McCormack


Disclaimer: The information in this document is intended to help Canadian health care decision-makers, health care professionals, health systems leaders, and policy-makers make well-informed decisions and thereby improve the quality of health care services. While patients and others may access this document, the document is made available for informational purposes only and no representations or warranties are made with respect to its fitness for any particular purpose. The information in this document should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice or as a substitute for the application of clinical judgment in respect of the care of a particular patient or other professional judgment in any decision-making process. The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH) does not endorse any information, drugs, therapies, treatments, products, processes, or services.

While care has been taken to ensure that the information prepared by CADTH in this document is accurate, complete, and up-to-date as at the applicable date the material was first published by CADTH, CADTH does not make any guarantees to that effect. CADTH does not guarantee and is not responsible for the quality, currency, propriety, accuracy, or reasonableness of any statements, information, or conclusions contained in any third-party materials used in preparing this document. The views and opinions of third parties published in this document do not necessarily state or reflect those of CADTH.

CADTH is not responsible for any errors, omissions, injury, loss, or damage arising from or relating to the use (or misuse) of any information, statements, or conclusions contained in or implied by the contents of this document or any of the source materials.

This document may contain links to third-party websites. CADTH does not have control over the content of such sites. Use of third-party sites is governed by the third-party website owners’ own terms and conditions set out for such sites. CADTH does not make any guarantee with respect to any information contained on such third-party sites and CADTH is not responsible for any injury, loss, or damage suffered as a result of using such third-party sites. CADTH has no responsibility for the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information by third-party sites.

Subject to the aforementioned limitations, the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Health Canada, Canada’s provincial or territorial governments, other CADTH funders, or any third-party supplier of information.

This document is prepared and intended for use in the context of the Canadian health care system. The use of this document outside of Canada is done so at the user’s own risk.

This disclaimer and any questions or matters of any nature arising from or relating to the content or use (or misuse) of this document will be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the Province of Ontario and the laws of Canada applicable therein, and all proceedings shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of the Province of Ontario, Canada.

The copyright and other intellectual property rights in this document are owned by CADTH and its licensors. These rights are protected by the Canadian Copyright Act and other national and international laws and agreements. Users are permitted to make copies of this document for non-commercial purposes only, provided it is not modified when reproduced and appropriate credit is given to CADTH and its licensors.

About CADTH: CADTH is an independent, not-for-profit organization responsible for providing Canada’s health care decision-makers with objective evidence to help make informed decisions about the optimal use of drugs, medical devices, diagnostics, and procedures in our health care system.

Funding: CADTH receives funding from Canada’s federal, provincial, and territorial governments, with the exception of Quebec.

Questions or requests for information about this report can be directed to requests@cadth.ca
Research Questions
1. What is the clinical effectiveness of manual therapies for non-cancer, non-specific back pain?
2. What is the cost-effectiveness of manual therapies for non-cancer, non-specific back pain?
3. What are the evidence-based guidelines regarding manual therapies for non-cancer, non-specific back pain?

Key Findings
Six systematic reviews (four with meta-analyses) were identified regarding the clinical effectiveness of manual therapies for non-cancer, non-specific back pain. In addition, three evidence-based guidelines were identified regarding manual therapies for non-cancer, non-specific back pain.

Methods
A limited literature search was conducted by an information specialist on key resources including PubMed, the Cochrane Library, the University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) databases, the websites of Canadian and major international health technology agencies, as well as a focused Internet search. The search strategy was comprised of both controlled vocabulary, such as the National Library of Medicine’s MeSH (Medical Subject Headings), and keywords. The main search concepts were manual therapy methods and back pain. Search filters were applied to limit retrieval to health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, or network meta-analyses, economic studies and guidelines. Where possible, retrieval was limited to the human population. The search was also limited to English language documents published between January 1, 2014 and October 2, 2019. Internet links were provided, where available.

Selection Criteria
One reviewer screened citations and selected studies based on the inclusion criteria presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Intervention</th>
<th>Adults living with chronic non-cancer, non-specific back pain, excluding pregnant patients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manual therapy, including manipulation, mobilization, traction, and soft tissue therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparator</td>
<td>Q1-2: Pharmacological interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No treatment (e.g., waitlist, sham interventions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usual care (if usual care is pharmacological interventions only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q3: Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Designs</th>
<th>Health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, randomized control trials, economic evaluations, evidence-based guidelines.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## Results

Rapid Response reports are organized so that the higher quality evidence is presented first. Therefore, health technology assessment reports, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses are presented first. These are followed by randomized controlled trials, economic evaluations, and evidence-based guidelines.

Six systematic reviews (four with meta-analyses) were identified regarding the clinical effectiveness of manual therapies for non-cancer, non-specific back pain. In addition, three evidence-based guidelines were identified regarding manual therapies for non-cancer, non-specific back pain. No relevant health technology assessments, randomized controlled trials, or economic evaluations were identified.

Additional references of potential interest are provided in the appendix.

**Health Technology Assessments**

No literature identified.

**Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses**

   PubMed: PM30867144

   PubMed: PM29371112

   PubMed: PM27660593

   PubMed: PM26329399

**Guidelines**


**Randomized Controlled Trials**

No literature identified.

**Economic Evaluations**

No literature identified.

**Guidelines and Recommendations**


Appendix — Further Information

Previous CADTH Reports


Systematic Reviews

Persistent or Chronic Non-Specific Low Back Pain Not Specified in Abstract


Comparator Not Specified in Abstract


Randomized Controlled Trials

Persistent or Chronic Non-Specific Low Back Pain Not Specified in Abstract


**Economic Evaluations**

*Persistent or Chronic Non-Specific Low Back Pain Not Specified in Abstract*


**Guidelines and Recommendations**

*Persistent or Chronic Non-Specific Low Back Pain Not Specified in Abstract*


See: 3.2.5 Manual Therapies


See: 1.2 Non-invasive treatments for low back pain and sciatica; Manual therapies (1.2.7)

**Review Articles**