

Community management and Sentinel Referral Guidelines for Patients with Chronic Low Back Pain

Chronic Low Back Pain (CLBP) is a very common pain condition presenting with persistent low back pain with/out leg pain.

Diagnosis:

CLBP presents with pain in the lumbar area between the lower border of the 12th rib and the lower gluteal folds. Pain duration of greater than 3 months.

Investigations:

Plain lumbar spine x-rays and MRI scans are not indicated in most cases of CLBP and are not essential prior to a referral.

Secondary care specialists will advise on the need for MRI scanning.

If red flag symptoms are present please refer to appropriate specialty (e.g. neurosurgery).

Community Management of CLBP:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Red flag symptoms excluded | yes/no |
| 2. Ensure basic medication trialed as per WHO ladder. Paracetamol, +/- NSAID, +/- Weak/moderate opioid. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Patient has had a course of physiotherapy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Treatment of mood disorder (e.g. underlying depression) has been addressed. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Guidelines for onward referral to chronic pain management service:

(rather than lumbar spine pathway)

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Patient could benefit from appropriate pain education, pain management programme, psychotherapy, interventional pain treatments | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Specialist medication advice is required. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Patient needs specialist investigations to establish diagnosis | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Specific advice regarding opioid drug usage required | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If any box above is ticked please forward referral onto the pain clinic.