

[IMAGE]

Commercials Worth Watching

In the 4.3 million inhabitants of Victoria, Australia, back pain is the condition responsible for one-quarter of all workers' compensation claims and half the costs of all compensation claims. Due to convincing evidence that psychological factors may be associated with back pain more than any other factors, the Victorian WorkCover Authority started a broad-based public health campaign in 1997 to alter widespread misconceptions about back pain and reduce disability costs in the state. The campaign encouraged patients with low back pain to stay active, exercise, remain at work, and avoid prolonged rest.

The study, published in the journal *Spine*, was conducted in Victoria, using the neighboring state of New South Wales as a control. Telephone surveys were carried out in both states before, two years into, and two-and-a-half years into the mass-media campaign, which involved prime-time television commercials and radio and billboard advertisements. Questionnaires on back-pain knowledge, such as how to avoid it, were used to determine the success of the campaign. General practitioners' beliefs and attitudes toward back pain were also recorded in a similar fashion.

The questionnaires were completed by almost 5,000 respondents in the general population and approximately 2,500 general practitioners. In Victoria, where the campaign was conducted, accurate knowledge about back pain increased significantly on the back-pain knowledge questionnaires. The population of New South Wales, which had no media campaign, showed no improvement in the questionnaire scores. In addition, general practitioners showed an increase in treatment knowledge in Victoria only.

This study shows that a broad-based media campaign may successfully improve society's knowledge about back pain. Back pain can be highly debilitating, yet is often avoidable through proper lifting techniques, strength training, good flexibility, etc. Ask your doctor of chiropractic about methods for avoiding low back pain.

Reference:

Buchbinder R, Jolley D, Wyatt M. 2001 Volvo Award winner in clinical studies: Effects of a media campaign on back pain beliefs and its potential influence on management of low back pain in general

practice. *Spine* 2001;26(23), pp. 2535-2542.

For more information on back pain, go to <http://www.chiroweb.com/find/tellmeabout/backpain.html>

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