

Military Health System Primary Care Provider Confidence with Back Pain Assessment Before and After Targeted MSK Education

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INTRODUCTION

- Back pain (BP) commonly affects Service Members (SM) and Veterans¹ with musculoskeletal disorders (MSKD) being a top reason for medical visits across the Department of War (DoW) and Veterans Affairs (VA) health systems.²⁻⁴
- Accurate evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of BP may improve the efficiency and plan of care by reducing unnecessary referrals and imaging.⁵
- The Active Duty and Veterans' Holistic Musculoskeletal Management and Enhancement (ADVet HOMME) program was designed to improve primary care providers' (PCP) knowledge, skills, and confidence in assessing and managing treatment of SM and Veterans with BP and other common MSKD via an in-person training course.

PURPOSE

To describe PCP confidence with back assessment, diagnosis, referral for imaging, and plan of care before and after an MSKD training course.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

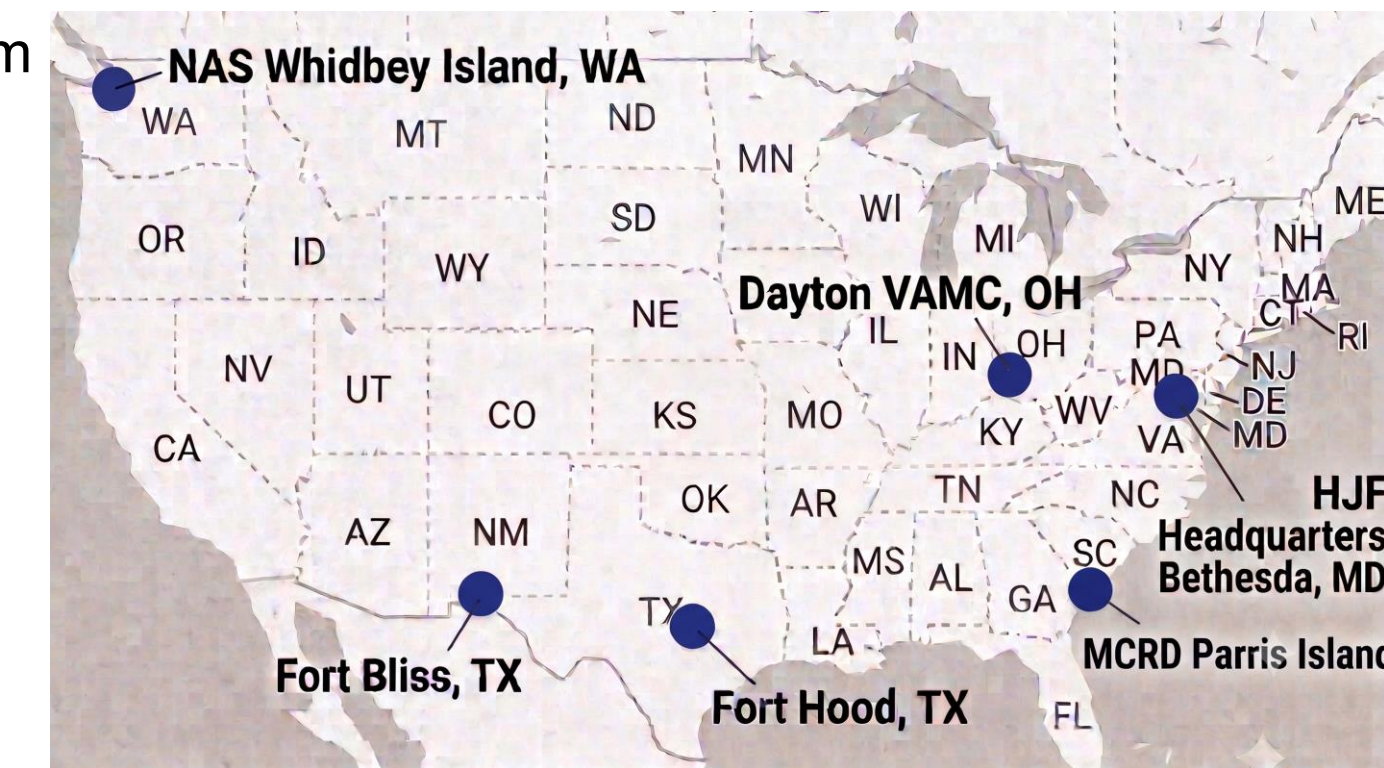
- ADVet HOMME utilized an existing evidence-based Women's Health Musculoskeletal Education Program authored by the Salt Lake City VA Medical Center Women's MSK Health Training Team, combining didactic and hands-on learning through small group rotations, mock case studies, and structured clinical examinations for MSKD. Training was provided by interprofessional MSKD experts from both the DoW and VA to 110 DoW PCPs (Physicians, NP, PA) and Enlisted Medic/Corpsmen over 3 years.
- Pre- and post-course surveys were administered to evaluate PCP perceived confidence assessing and diagnosing BP, imaging referrals, and determining management plans on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Not at all Confident* to *Extremely Confident*.

RESULTS

- Survey responses were collapsed to *Not at all/Slightly confident*, *Somewhat confident*, and *Quite/Extremely Confident* and reported as frequencies and percentages in Table 1. The pre-course survey was completed by 84 DoW PCPs, 59 of which completed the post-course surveys.

Table 1: Provider Confidence Levels Pre and Post MSK Training Regarding BP Assessment and Management

	Not at all / Slightly Confident	Somewhat confident	Quite / Extremely Confident	Total (n)
Effectively evaluate a patient				
Pre	14.3% (12)	29.8% (25)	55.9% (47)	84
Post	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (59)	59
Diagnose back pain with a history and physical alone				
Pre	16.7% (14)	39.3% (33)	44% (37)	84
Post	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)	94.9% (56)	59
Determine when x-rays are needed				
Pre	15.5% (13)	29.8% (25)	54.8% (46)	84
Post	1.7% (1)	3.4% (2)	94.9% (55)	59
Determine when an MRI is needed				
Pre	20.3% (17)	29.8% (25)	50% (42)	84
Post	1.7% (1)	5.1% (3)	93.2% (55)	59
Develop an appropriate management plan				
Pre	15.5% (13)	38.1% (32)	46.4% (39)	84
Post	3.4% (2)	1.7% (1)	94.9% (56)	59



Map 1. Map of MSK Education Program Locations

CONCLUSIONS

- Approximately 44-56% and 93-100% of pre- and post-course survey responses, respectively, indicated quite to extremely confident in assessing and diagnosing BP, referring for imaging, and developing appropriate management plans.
- Future research should assess specialty and imaging referral practices following MSKD training to determine potential subsequent cost savings.

QUESTIONS?

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Picture 2. PCP hands-on skills practice

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Picture 1. PCP hands-on skills practice