

## THE CLINICAL PARAMETERS AND REGIMES USED IN THE APPLICATION OF LUMBAR TRACTION: A POSTAL SURVEY.

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**Introduction:** The evidence for the effectiveness of lumbar traction remains inconclusive due to poor methodological quality<sup>1,2</sup> and the lack of appropriate treatment parameters in many trials<sup>2</sup>. A trial may be of high methodological quality but if its treatment procedures are of poor quality, such weakness will affect the strength of the overall conclusion<sup>2</sup>. In designing future high quality trials it is essential to reflect the treatment parameters used in clinical practice; however, little is known about the treatment regimes used with traction as there has been limited research in this area and no surveys have addressed this topic.

The current descriptive survey was planned to investigate:

- The current use of lumbar traction by physiotherapists;
- The types of LBP patients that receive traction;
- The treatment parameters used in the application of traction; and
- The treatment modalities and regimes used in conjunction with traction.

**Research method:** a postal questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of 1491 musculoskeletal UK Chartered Physiotherapists (accessed via the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy). The Research Ethical Committee University of Ulster granted ethical approval. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used for analysis of data and consisted mainly of descriptive statistics.

**Results:** A high response rate was achieved (83%, n= 1239), results indicated that 41% (n= 507) of therapists continue to use lumbar traction with 11% of their LBP patients, principally in the management of sub acute LBP with nerve root symptoms. Treatment parameters were established for recommended weights (mean 13-38Kgs), frequency (2-3 times weekly) and length of treatment (4 weeks). In addition to this traction is commonly used with other modalities (87%): mobilizations, advice re posture and general exercises/core stability exercises.

**Conclusion:** The results of this survey have demonstrated the continued use of traction by UK physiotherapists; in addition, it also clarifies current clinical practice and treatment parameters. A pragmatic randomized controlled trial will be conducted on the basis of these findings.

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### References

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