Learn More

The SMARTER team is continuing to work on compiling all of the information and input you shared with us, including evaluations on your experience participating. As we share additional results, papers, and reports, we will post them on our website (hard copies also available – just contact us!): http://bit.ly/2wFJfAa.

We will also be developing plain language summaries of each scientific paper we publish and will make those available on our website, too. The first two summaries are included along with this booklet.

Contact Us

We continue to welcome your input on any of the results in this booklet or any additional results you would like to see. If you would like to receive a hard copy of any results, please reach out to SMARTER Project Manager Sarah Lawrence at:

Phone: (206) 221-7453

Mail: Sarah Lawrence, Surgical Outcomes Research Center, 1107 NE 45th St, Suite 502, Seattle, WA 98105. If you would like to receive electronic updates from our team about SMARTER and other projects, register for our quarterly newsletter: http://bit.ly/2gE1EFV.
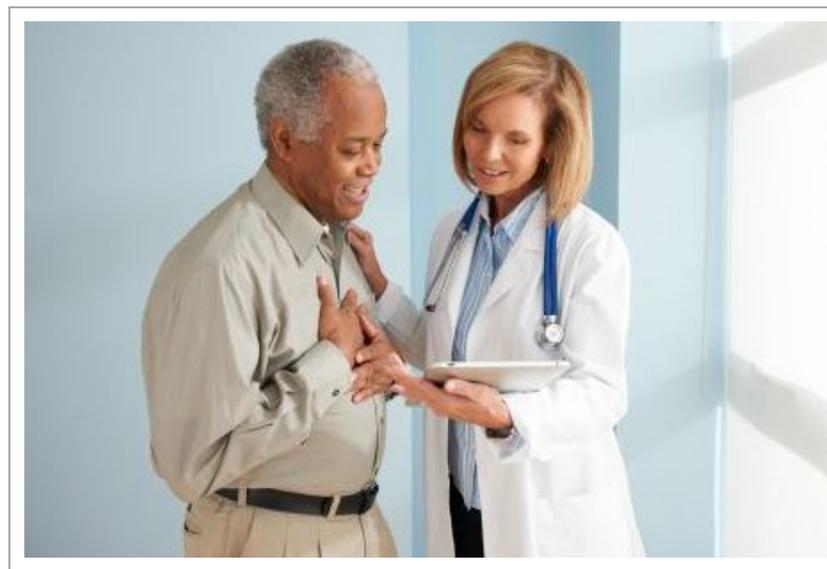
PATIENT ADVISORY NETWORK

CERTAIN

Study of Methods for Assessing Research Topic Elicitation and pRioritization (SMARTER)

RESULTS REPORT TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Thanks for participating!

As a member of the Back pain Outcomes using Longitudinal Data (BOLD) registry, in 2015, we invited you to be part of **Study of Methods for Assessing Research Topic Elicitation and pRioritization**, or **SMARTER**. We designed SMARTER to learn what approaches work best to involve patients in identifying and prioritizing research topics.

First, you completed a survey. Next, we matched you to one of three research activities: 1) online crowd-voting, 2) an in-person focus group, or 3) two rounds of a mailed survey. In March 2017, we completed these activities. This booklet summarizes the results.

We are sharing the priorities we heard from you with researchers and other groups who focus on back pain research, through publications and research collaborations. We are also sharing information with researchers about how to better involve patients in setting research priorities.

Thank you for your participation! Your help has shown us how to better involve patients in research and is greatly appreciated!

On behalf of the SMARTER team,

Danielle Lavallee

SMARTER Lead Researcher

Discussion around the topics varied – for example, when discussing a topic, some participants mentioned their own experience with a treatment, while others talked about conversations with their doctor, or how important they felt the topic to be to research.

Crowd-voting participants were the youngest group of participants in Phase 2, with an average age of 74. However, the average age of focus group and mailed survey participants were similar – focus group participants were an average age of 75, and the mailed survey group was an average age of 77.

More women than men participated in the focus groups and mailed survey activity (women were 71% and 61% of participants, respectively). The crowd-voting activity saw an even split among male and female participants.

All 3 of the Phase 2 groups were predominantly White (83% in crowd-voting, 65% in focus groups, 83% in mailed surveys) and non-Hispanic (100% in crowd-voting, 97% in focus groups, 94% in mailed surveys).

Participants in all 3 activities were also generally highly educated – 78% of crowd-voting participants, 60% of focus group attendees, and 54% of mailed survey participants had a college degree or higher.

While we gained valuable information about involving patients in research and generated important lists of research priorities that will be shared with doctors and researchers who focus on back pain, the characteristics of our participants tell us that we need to keep working on better ways to ensure diversity in the voices and experiences represented.

Phase 2 Research Priorities

Online Crowd-Voting Top 5 Research Priorities
1. What are the causes of low back pain?
2. What role does weight control/exercise play in treating low back pain?
3. Which physical health programs work best to help people experiencing different types of low back pain?
4. What are effective tests to diagnose the causes of different types of low back pain?
5. How can we best organize primary care services to become more effective in treating low back pain?

Focus Groups Top 5 Research Priorities
1. How can we best organize primary care services to become more effective in treating low back pain?
2. What are the causes of low back pain?
3. What are the most effective strategies for improving physician communication & counseling skills when working with patients experiencing low back pain?
4. What are the most effective self-care strategies for treating and managing low back pain?
5. Which physical health programs work best to help people experiencing different types of low back pain?

Mailed Surveys Top 5 Research Priorities
1. What are the most effective self-care strategies for treating and managing low back pain?
2. What are the most effective strategies for improving physician communication and counseling skills when working with patients experiencing low back pain?
3. How can low back pain disability be reduced?
4. (tied) How can we best organize primary care services to become more effective in treating low back pain?
4. (tied) What are the causes of low back pain?

What is SMARTER?

Historically, the patient voice has been missing in the early stages of research, when the research question is identified and research agendas are set. As a result, what matters most to patients may not be reflected in research studies.

SMARTER's main goal is to inform researchers on how different methods compare for involving people in the early stages of research.

Our team worked with 2 healthcare systems: Henry Ford Health System in Detroit, MI, and Kaiser Permanente Northern California in Oakland, CA. This is how we connected with you. We then asked for your input on identifying and prioritizing back pain research topics.

First, we got your input using a mailed survey. Next, we divided people into one of three Phase 2 research activities: online crowd-voting, a focus group, or a two-part mailed survey based on interest and willingness to continue involvement in the study.

SMARTER Phase I Activities

924 BOLD registry participants from Henry Ford and Kaiser completed the initial Phase 1 survey. In the Phase 1 survey, you and fellow BOLD participants selected these top 5 back pain research topics:

1.	What are the causes of low back pain?
2.	What are the most effective self-care strategies for treating and managing low back pain?
3.	What are the most effective tests to diagnose the causes of different types of low back pain?
4.	What are the best strategies for putting research results into clinical practice?
5.	Which physical health programs work best to help people experiencing different types of low back pain?

SMARTER Phase 2 Activities

At the end of the Phase 1 survey, we asked you to indicate the Phase 2 activity in which you were interested in participating: online crowd-voting, focus groups, or a two-part mailed survey. The graphics below show you how many people participated in the Phase 2 research activities.

Online Crowd-Voting
38 People

In-Person Focus Groups
39 People

Mailed Surveys
74 People

Online crowd-voting is an internet tool that is used to gather a large group's opinions on a subject. Major companies such as Domino's and Coca-Cola have used crowd-voting to decide on new products. In SMARTER, crowd-voting participants voted on and discussed topics for back pain research.

Focus groups are small groups of people who meet in person to share their opinions on a topic. SMARTER focus groups brought together up to 10 people at a time to discuss what they thought were the most important priorities for back pain research.

Mailed surveys used a method called the Delphi to identify a list of back pain research priorities. The Delphi method is a way of surveying a group to come to consensus on the most important topics. Mailed survey participants were able to see how the group voted after the 1st round of surveys and were given the option to vote again – the idea being that when the group's opinions are shared, consensus will be more easily obtained.

Phase 2 Research Priorities

38 people participated in the crowd-voting activity, 39 in the focus groups, and 74 in the mailed survey activity. Each of the Phase 2 activities generated a similar list of top 5 research priorities displayed on the following page. Some of the topics appeared on more than one of the top 5 lists.