

# Connecting pain science research to physiotherapy practice

**Body in Mind website <http://www.bodyinmind.org/>**

The past decades have seen physiotherapy develop from its biomechanical roots to incorporate increased knowledge of the psychological and social impacts of the conditions treated by physiotherapists (Waddell 2004). Arguably the next stage of this evolution is to integrate recent advances in the neurobiological understanding of pain processing into the theory and practice of the profession. The source of this understanding comes from emergent and newly integrated knowledge in the areas of sensory processing, brain imaging, neuroplasticity, and cognitive appraisal.

The value for the profession of linking with this knowledge has been recognised recently in *Journal of Physiotherapy* (Jones and Hush 2011) and is reflected by the rising involvement of physiotherapists in professional pain bodies such as the International Association for the Study of Pain and the Australian Pain Society.

However, it has long been recognised that new research knowledge travels a slow and torturous path before influencing clinical practice. The Body in Mind (BiM) website is an innovative online resource that aims to address this implementation gap between experimental work and its clinical application. The overarching goal is to facilitate and disseminate credible clinical science research. The BiM team is lead by Professor Lorimer Moseley from The University of South Australia and Neuroscience Research Australia and includes his research groups at these institutions together with other national and international collaborators. The team gathers and appraises scientific information about the influence of the brain and mind on pain disorders. The emphasis is on presenting information in a way that is accessible to researchers and providing a forum for debate and discussion between researchers, clinicians, students, patients, and the lay public.

The central element of the BiM website is a blog that is updated twice weekly. Each blog post consists of a summary of a published research report together with interpretation and appraisal focused on clinical implications. Posts are written either by an author of the published work or members of the BiM team and collaborators. The writing style is appropriately informal which enables readers from a non-academic background to access the material and encourages engagement in discussion. Readers are free to add comments to the post. Generally, the blog authors demonstrate a high degree of skill in distilling the published research to key messages, which set the scene for interesting debate. Comments are screened for inappropriate content before being posted online.

The BiM website also includes information about the members of the group, links to relevant articles, events, courses and books produced by group members, as well as information about ongoing research studies, and a section for recently-completed research students to place an e-copy of their thesis.

The site has many things going for it and parlays these strengths into excellent engagement from researchers, clinicians and interested public. Professor Moseley has an international following due to his research output, authorship of influential texts (most notably *Explain*

*Pain*), engaging presentation style and ability to translate neurological research into a format accessible to those without specialised knowledge. His relaxed and personable style is reflected on the BiM website. Technically, the site itself has a professional feel, is easy to navigate, visually appealing and is kept up to date. In this respect, the website benefits greatly from the input of Heidi Allen, a professional social media consultant with an interest in health care whose role involves day-to-day running of the site.

The site sees some 15 000 visitors each month and almost all blog posts generate some degree of discussion. That discussion is at times controversial probably attests to the relevance and timeliness of the material presented. Similarly the fact that discussion comes from researchers, clinicians, and the public indicates the broad significance of the material. The field of pain science is an emerging area of interest to physiotherapists, and according to a survey on the site, approximately 45% of users identify themselves as physiotherapists. The content of the site has clear relevance for the physiotherapy profession.

This website provides a worthwhile resource for clinicians treating patients with painful conditions and in doing so serves multiple purposes. It presents relevant information in one place, provides concise and user-friendly summaries, and offers a forum for discussion and debate as to the significance and utility of the findings. Poor accessibility of scientific information has been identified as a barrier to evidence-based practice (Iles and Davidson 2006). Accessibility issues include difficulties in finding relevant information, costs involved in procuring published studies, and also the capacity of non-academic users to appraise and process study reports. Sites such as Body in Mind provide an invaluable tool for overcoming these barriers.

I have no substantial issues with the content, the structure, or tone of the site. One remark however, attends to a question of interpretation of some of the research presented. While the focus is on highlighting the potential clinical applicability of research, there is the risk that preliminary or experimental findings may not be treated with the appropriate degree of circumspection before implementation into clinical practice. The extent to which the authors of the posts are responsible for this is of course debatable, but it is an issue that should be borne in mind by users of the site.

Body in Mind is an excellent website with clear relevance and utility for physiotherapists whose caseload includes patients with pain conditions. The blog posts are concise and easy to read, and the discussions frequently interesting and enlightening. The website performs an important function in bringing pain research in a digestible form to a broad audience.

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## Disclosure

The author of this review has contributed occasional posts to the Body in Mind website.

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## References

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# Journal of Physiotherapy

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## Publication policy update

The Editorial Board advises three developments:

1. Randomised clinical trials. From 1 January 2013 this journal requires that all papers reporting randomised clinical trials provide evidence of prospective registration with an internationally recognised trial register. Papers without prospective registration will be returned. The requirement for prospective registration is waived for trials that began recruitment before 1 January 2006.
2. Systematic reviews. The journal encourages registration of systematic reviews with PROSPERO, the international prospective register of systematic reviews which can be found at <http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO/>. Authors should note that PROSPERO provides prospective registration only, and so are encouraged to register their systematic reviews prospectively.
3. Trial protocols. The journal now accepts and encourages submission of trial protocols of significant research. The criteria for acceptance and a template showing the information required are available in the Author Guidelines on the journal website [jop.physiotherapy.asn.au](http://jop.physiotherapy.asn.au). Brief details of the trial will be published in the print version of the journal, supplemented by a fuller description of the trial available as an eAddendum on the journal website. An explanation of the decision to include trial protocols can be found in the Editorial on page 6 of this issue of the journal.