

GP guidelines needed for chronic pain treatment

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Some patients with chronic pain could be better served by being prescribed vitamin D supplements by their GP, according to research at the University of Adelaide.

Researchers in the University's School of Population Health have been studying the treatment of patients with chronic non-specific musculoskeletal pain, and they've found it can vary widely.

"The patients in this group are experiencing chronic pain and it is a very common condition. So we wanted to know how general practitioners were responding to these patients and whether we could make recommendations that might help the GPs in their work," says PhD student and medical doctor Manasi Gaikwad.

"Vitamin D supplements are known to help ease the symptoms of people with this type of [chronic pain](#), and there are no known negative side-effects. Vitamin D supplementation is readily available and a relatively cheap option.

"We found that the GPs we studied have observed positive effect of vitamin D supplementation on these patients. However, this can be a slow process, involving repeat visits to the GP, and additional costs such as blood tests.

"There are no guidelines for prescribing vitamin D to this group of patients," Dr Gaikwad says.

Dr Gaikwad says that despite the prevalence of this condition in the community, its diagnosis and treatment remains complicated.

"Several studies have been conducted showing that patients with chronic non-specific musculoskeletal pain (CNMP) can receive relief after increasing vitamin D intake. But until now there has been no study to understand the clinical reasoning GPs use to decide which patients should or should not receive vitamin D supplementation," she says.

"The research has highlighted that a standardised approach to treatment could be beneficial for both the GPs and patients."

Dr Gaikwad says there is strong support among GPs for these patients to receive [vitamin D](#), but they also encourage more sun exposure, and not just taking supplements.

"This is an issue because many people are working indoors, out of the sun, and spending much of their non-working hours indoors also. A little bit of sun is healthy, and GPs are encouraging their [patients](#) to go outside a bit more each day," she says.

Provided by University of Adelaide

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