Author’s response to reviews

Title: Physician-reported barriers to using evidence-based recommendations for low back pain in clinical practice: a systematic review and synthesis of qualitative studies using the Theoretical Domains Framework

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Reviewer #1:

1. You have been responsive to the reviewers’ comments. The only remaining suggestion is related to the results section of the abstract. You looked at 5 behaviors but only report on 4. Why not report on all 5 and identify the 2 that you are confident in?

Thank you, this is a valuable suggestion that we missed. We have revised the results section of the abstract to read as follows:

“Fourteen studies (n=318 physicians) from 9 countries reported barriers to adopting one of the 5 guideline-recommended behaviours regarding in-clinic diagnostic assessments (9 studies, n=198), advice on activity (7 studies, n=194), medication prescription (2 studies, n=39), imaging referrals (11 studies, n=270) and treatment/specialist referrals (8 studies, n=193). However, we are confident in the evidence related to only 2 of those behaviours. Imaging behaviour is influenced by: (i) social influence - from patients requesting an image or wanting a diagnosis
(n=252, 9 studies), (ii) beliefs about consequence - physicians believe that providing a scan will reassure patients (n=175, 6 studies), and (iii) environmental context and resources - physicians report a lack of time to have a conversation with patients about diagnosis and why a scan is not needed (n=179, 6 studies). Referrals to conservative care is influenced by environmental context and resources - long wait-times or a complete lack of access to adjunct services prevented physicians from referring to these services (n=82, 5 studies).”

Reviewer #2

This is fine. One minor point change

1. Page 17: You need to add references for this sentence: 'For example, we identified several qualitative reviews investigating barriers to implementing guidelines that identified between 3 to 9 TDF domains as determinants of the target behaviour'.

Thank you, this was an oversight in our previous revision. We added in the references for the 6 studies on page 17, line 8 to read as follows:

“This issue is not unique to back pain; it is common to many health contexts (e.g. osteoarthritis, nutrition, physical activity, anti-psychotics, oral health and weight management). For example, we identified several qualitative reviews investigating barriers to implementing guidelines that identified between 3 to 9 TDF domains as determinants of the target behaviour.[46-51]”