Improving access and control for pain management clients

Patients who find it challenging to attend Austin Health’s Pain Service will soon have a new way to access information and resources on how to live with pain day-to-day through the Live better! online learning management system.

## Background

Austin Health operates a community-based pain service that provides group education and pain management programs as well as individual treatment and education from a multidisciplinary team of allied health, nursing and medical professionals.

While the service has been well received by clients and effective in reducing pain-related disability, steadily rising demand has increased the service’s wait times to three months, delaying access to education and resources that would help clients learn how to live with persistent pain.

Clients have reported that the long wait times can be very difficult, leaving them feeling anxious, isolated and alone. They have also said the group education program does not always meet their individual needs, that travelling to the Pain Service centre for education can be challenging, and that the service’s communication with clients throughout their journey could be improved.

Austin Health plans to build an online learning management system (LMS) that will provide clients with earlier access to education, care and clinical support, enabling them to better manage their pain in their own home and community.

In addition to improving health outcomes, the project aims to provide clients with a better, person-centred experience – while waiting to access the service, during the program, and after being discharged.

The new Live better! LMS platform and online program will allow clients to access the information, education and resources they need in a way that suits their individual circumstances and preferences.

**Live better! persistent pain learning management system**

**Lead** Austin Health

**Funding round** 2019–20

**Status** In progress

**Objectives**

* Reduce the wait time for patients to access the Pain Service’s education and self-management strategies
* Improve access to the Pain Service for those who are unable to attend the centre-based programs
* Deliver positive health outcomes through the LMS that are comparable to those achieved by the centre-based programs
* Improve the patient experience by providing more flexible, accessible and client-centred education on persistent pain

## Key activity

Austin Health will launch an LMS that will host a suite of online learning modules developed by the Pain Service team.

While clients will largely be encouraged to self-direct their own learning, clinician support will be available throughout their journey.

The LMS will:

* **give clients more choice –** clients will be able to choose whether they prefer group education at the Pain Service centre or online education and self-management strategies that they can complete at their own pace and in their own time
* **give clients earlier access to resources and greater control –** the LMS’ interactive options will allow clients to independently source, engage with, and develop skills, confidence and capabilities, providing them with greater control over their own knowledge, engagement and experience with the Pain Service
* **improve communication with the Pain Service team –** Pain Service staff will be checking in with clients who are using the online program to see how they are managing, answer any questions they may have, and ensure they can access the right information, providing tailored communication and individual support via the LMS platform’s discussion and telehealth functions throughout the client’s journey
* **provide a single view of a client’s care –** the LMS will link into other streams of Austin Health’s work to provide the health service and its clients with a single, authenticated portal that can be used to receive and access information and records.

## Status

This innovation project was accepted in the Better Care Victoria 2019–20 funding round and is currently underway.

