

Physiotherapy Research Foundation

Grant Case Study

Researcher Name:	Associate Professor Peter Malliaras
Grant Type & Year:	Tagged Grant, 2005 and Seeding Grant, 2018
Research Title	<p>The effectiveness of hip adductor versus hip abductor strengthening for groin pain among young athletes (2005).</p> <p>Internet-based management of rotator cuff tendinopathy with remote physiotherapist led support: a pilot and feasibility randomised controlled trial (2018).</p>

Research Background

Tendinopathy is a common condition that refers to pathology and pain of the tendon, generally caused by overuse, repetitive movement, overload or excessive weight. Achilles, patellar, lateral elbow and rotator cuff tendinopathies are examples of four common tendinopathies. While the true incidence and total burden of tendinopathy on the healthcare system is unknown, they can impact quality of life and ability for people to be active and some take many months to resolve.

About the Grant Recipient

Peter Malliaras is a leading musculoskeletal physiotherapist, with a clinical interest in managing tendinopathies. He is an Associate Professor at the Department of Physiotherapy, at Monash University.

Associate Professor Malliaras completed his PhD in tendinopathy in 2006 and has gone on to conduct research that has generated over 120 peer reviewed papers and been cited nearly 5,000 times.¹ His studies focus on understanding the efficacy of tendinopathy interventions and treatments and have resulted in changes to practice guidelines for the treatment of Achilles and patellar tendinopathy in Australia and the UK.

Peter has received numerous awards, presents regularly at conferences and provides clinical postgraduate education for clinicians in Australia and overseas. He continues to work in clinical practice and has an international reputation as an expert in difficult to manage lower limb tendinopathies.

The Impact on Knowledge Production and Further Funding

Associate Professor Malliaras' first PRF funded grant research project resulted in publication of "Hip flexibility and strength measures: reliability and association with athletic groin pain" in the British Journal of Sports Medicine in 2009. While Peter did not go on to pursue further research in this area,

it was a successful paper that has been built on by a growing body of researchers and has been cited 145 times. Due to the niche area of the research, he doubts the project would have gone ahead without the PRF funding. As his first grant Associate Professor Malliaras also credits it with helping him develop a funding track record that was important at the start of his post-doctoral research career. He believes it is important that the PRF continues to support early career researchers and provide funding for niche projects.

In 2018, Associate Professor Malliaras was also involved in a PRF funded grant research project titled “Internet-based management of rotator cuff tendinopathy with remote physiotherapist led support: a pilot and feasibility randomised controlled trial”. The research investigated the potential to provide effective educational exercise treatment to patients with a specific type of shoulder pain using internet-based and telerehabilitation delivery of recommended care.

The output from this research was published in October 2020, which concluded it was feasible to progress to a full-scale trial. In the same month, the research team was awarded a \$201,000 HCF Research grant to conduct the randomised controlled trial to assess the effectiveness and safety of the intervention. They have stated planning to recruit 300 people to participate in the larger trial.

Looking to the Future: Practice and Health Sector Benefits

The surge in interest in telehealth due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown restrictions proved timely for the research undertaken by Associate Professor Malliaras. Despite this, concerns about the effectiveness of telerehabilitation persist amongst clinicians and patients. The outcomes of the current trial will be important to provide confidence in both effectiveness and safety, and to enable progression to more widespread implementation.

Associate Professor Malliaras believes there are many advantages of a telerehabilitation approach to managing shoulder pain, including costs savings, greater access to care and improvements in quality arising from a standardised treatment approach.

If the current large-scale trials show that the approach is effective, Peter plans to create capacity building training courses to train physiotherapists to deliver the telerehabilitation approach. He also plans to lobby for appropriate MBS and private health insurance rebates for the intervention.

1. https://scholar.google.com.au/citations?hl=en&user=dij8mYkAAAAJ&view_op=list_works&sortby=pubdate Accessed 23/4/21