

# Patients with chronic pain value empathic doctors who validate concerns and communicate clearly

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Researchers have conducted a cross-sectional study of patient satisfaction among adult participants with chronic low back pain in a

national pain research registry using self-reported measures of physician communication, physician empathy, current physician opioid prescribing for low back pain, and outcomes pertaining to pain intensity, physical function, and health-related quality of life. The work is published in *The Annals of Family Medicine* journal.

The researchers measured the associations among process, outcomes and [patient satisfaction](#) within general [medical care](#) for chronic low back pain, provided through an ongoing patient-physician relationship. They also used two models to measure factors associated with patient satisfaction, including studying a subgroup of participants experiencing chronic low back pain who were being treated by the same physician for more than five years.

Among 1,352 participants, only physician empathy and physician communication were associated with patient satisfaction in the multivariable analysis that controlled for potential confounders. Similarly, in the subgroup of 355 participants, physician empathy and physician communication remained linked to patient satisfaction in the multivariable analysis.

Physician empathy and physician communication were strongly associated with patient satisfaction with medical care for chronic low back pain. Researchers argue that [patients](#) with chronic pain highly value physicians who are empathic and who make efforts to more clearly communicate treatment plans and expectations.

Despite medical advances in managing chronic pain experienced by millions of Americans, little research has been conducted on how patient-physician interaction impacts the process of delivering medical care for [chronic low back pain](#), and ultimately, patient satisfaction.

**More information:** John C. Licciardone et al, Patient Satisfaction

With Medical Care for Chronic Low Back Pain: A Pain Research Registry Study, *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2023). DOI: [10.1370/afm.2949](https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2949)

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