

Low Back Pain in cycling



1

DOES IT MATTER HOW YOU SIT?

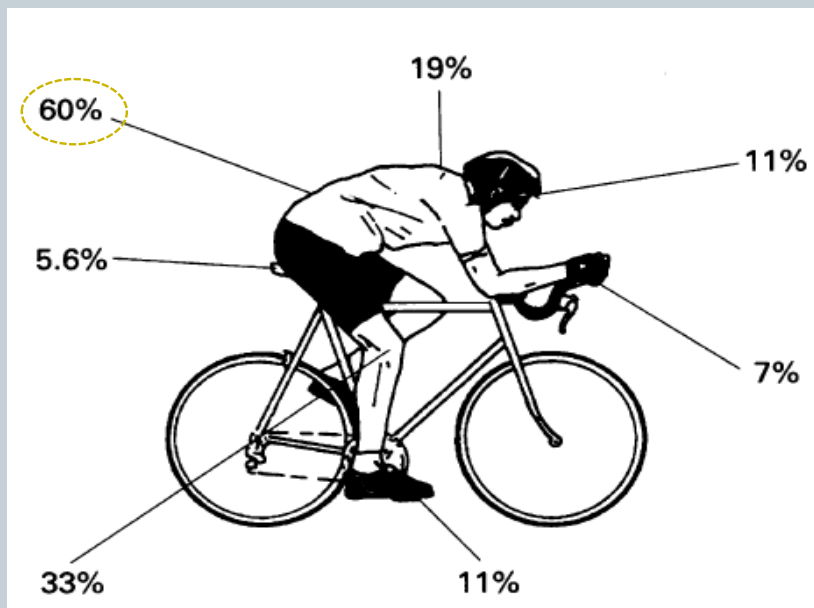


- LBP in cycling?
- Pathomechanisms
- Multidimensional framework
- What is underlying cycling related LBP?
- Managing cycling related LBP?

LBP in cycling?

3

- Is a common problem
 - Prevalence: 31 to 60%
 - Elite: 45% (1year incidence: 58%)

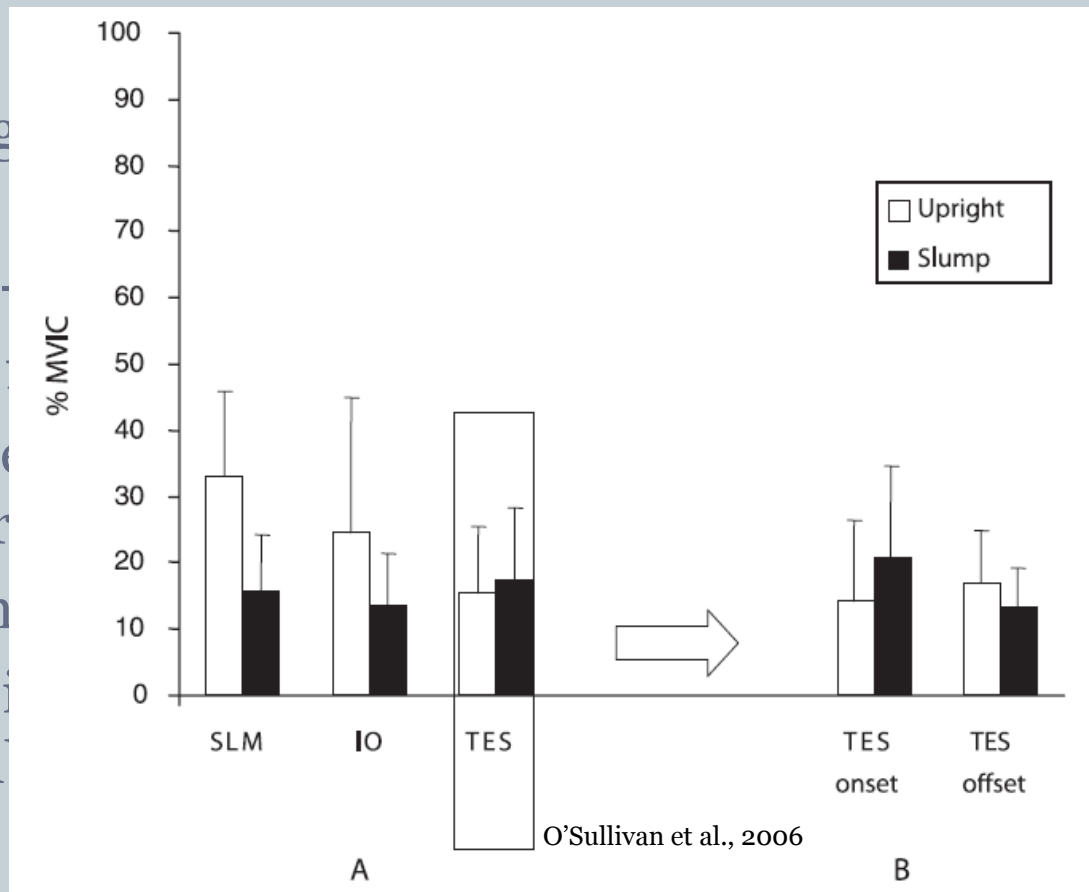


- Based on non-cycling biomechanical laboratory studies
 - Intersegmental forces transferred through the Fl/Rotated TxLx spine
 - Flexion-relaxation phenomenon
 - Muscle fatigue
 - Sustained forward flexion during cycling - increases the risk of tissue irritation or damage (disc ischemia)
 - Mechanical-creep effect
 - (Excessive muscle activation - increased tissue strain across the lumbar spine)

O'Sullivan et al., 2006

- Based on non-cycling biomechanical laboratory studies

- Intersegmental spine
- Flexion-relaxation
- Muscle activity
- Sustained tissue in
- Mechanical
- (Excessive) the lumbar



Rotated TxLx

es the risk of

ain across

What is
underlying
(cycling) related
NSCLBP?

What is
underlying
NSCLBP?



...behavior – **posture** – beliefs
– attitudes (re
work/movement/damage) –
advice (from hairdresser – chiro – internet) – **fear** –
previous Hx – compensation – family
dynamics – occupation – sports –
lifestyle – **pathology** -

Beliefs about LBP

10

- “I hurt my back, so I will probably have bad back pain from now on”
- “I have back pain, so I should stay in bed and rest”
- “The more back pain I have, the more my spine is damaged”
- “My back pain is due to something being ‘out of place’”
- “I need a scan or X-ray for my back pain”
- “I need an operation to cure my back pain”

Myths!

What is the underlying mechanism (*cause*) of NSCLBP?

neuro-physiological factors

Psycho-social
factors

And the answer is.....?
All form part of a complex picture

too much stability



Multidimensional clinical reasoning framework

12

**BASED ON
O'SULLIVAN'S CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM (OCS)**



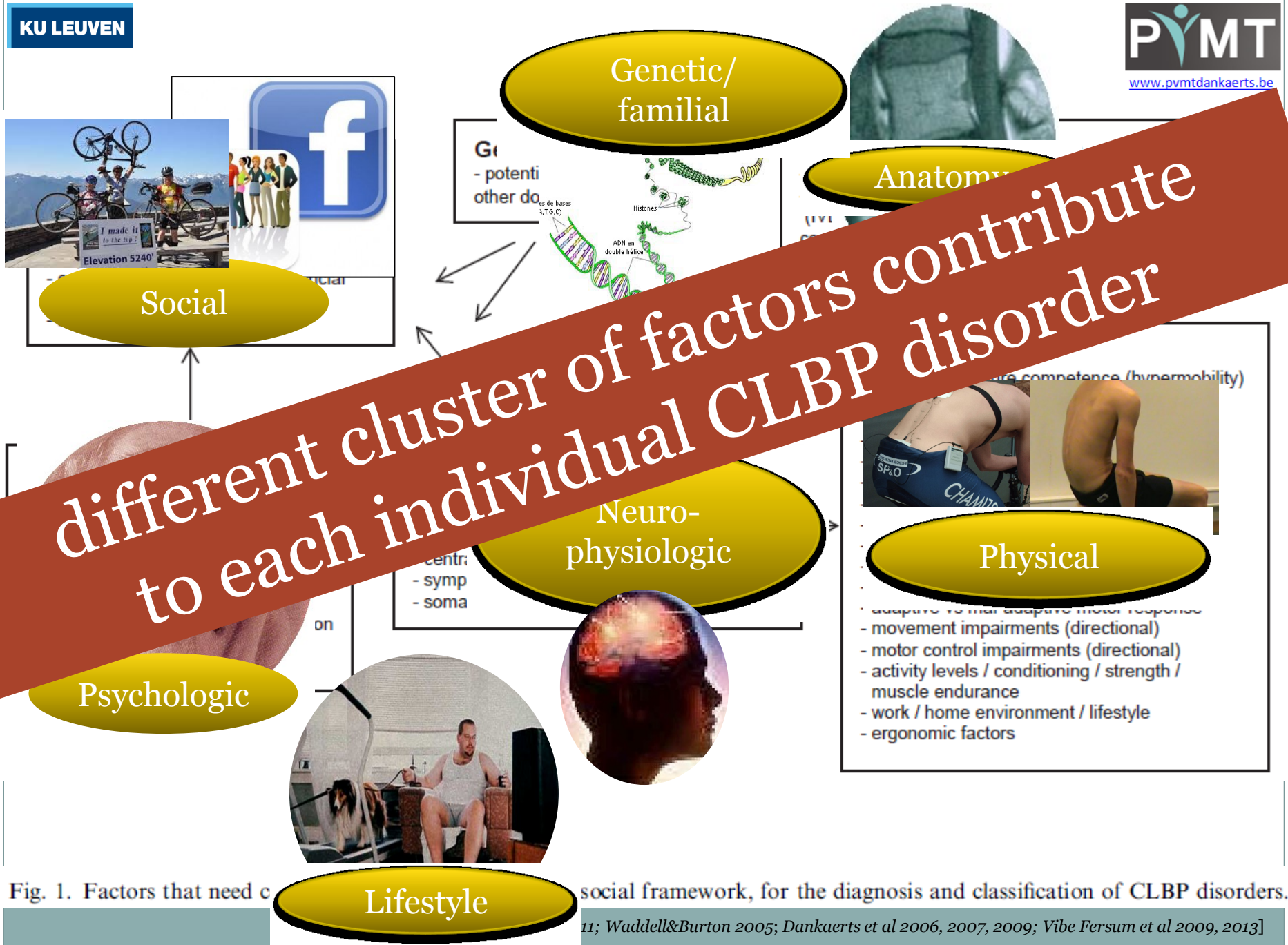


Fig. 1. Factors that need a social framework, for the diagnosis and classification of CLBP disorders.

11; Waddell&Burton 2005; Dankaerts et al 2006, 2007, 2009; Vibe Fersum et al 2009, 2013]

Anatomy

Genetic/
familial



14

es de bases
(A,T,G,C)



what do we find out
to parents factors



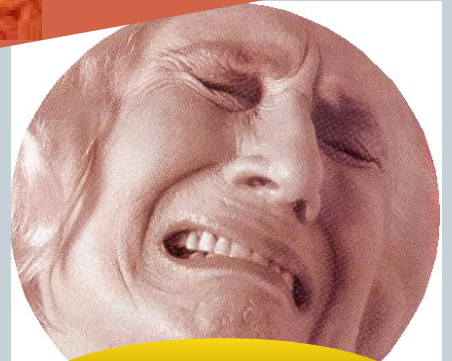
CLBP

to pa

disorder



Social



Psychologic

Chronic low back pain disorders

Red flag disorders

- Cancer
- Infection
- Inflammatory disorder
- Fracture

Specific back pain disorders

- Spondylolisthesis
- disc herniation + radicular pain
- degenerative disc + modic changes
- foraminal and central stenosis

Adaptive response
Patients response to disorder is adaptive / protective

Management
Advise, medical, surgical – as appropriate

Mal-adaptive
Patients response to disorder is mal-adaptive / provocative
Control or movement impairment classification

Management
- Medical
- Cognitive / Motor learning
- control or movement impairment directed

Non-specific back pain disorders

Centrally mediated back pain
Eg. 'Fibromyagia'
Regional pain syndromes
Somatisation

Dominant psycho-social factors

Multi-disciplinary management
Psychological (CBT), medical, functional rehabilitation

Non-dominant psycho-social factors

Medical management
Functional rehabilitation

Peripherally mediated back pain
Maladaptive movement behaviours

Control impairment
(directional subgroups)

+/- central pain modulation based on contribution of psycho-social factors

- Motor learning within cognitive framework (enhance control)
- Functional restoration
- +/- medical

Movement impairment
(directional subgroups)

- Motor learning within cognitive framework (enhance movement / relaxation)
- Functional restoration
- +/- medical

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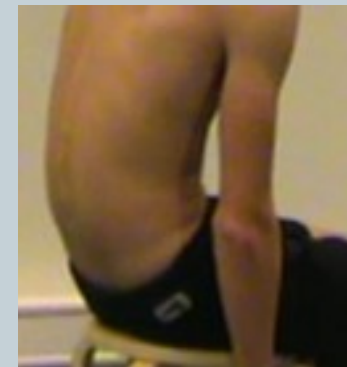
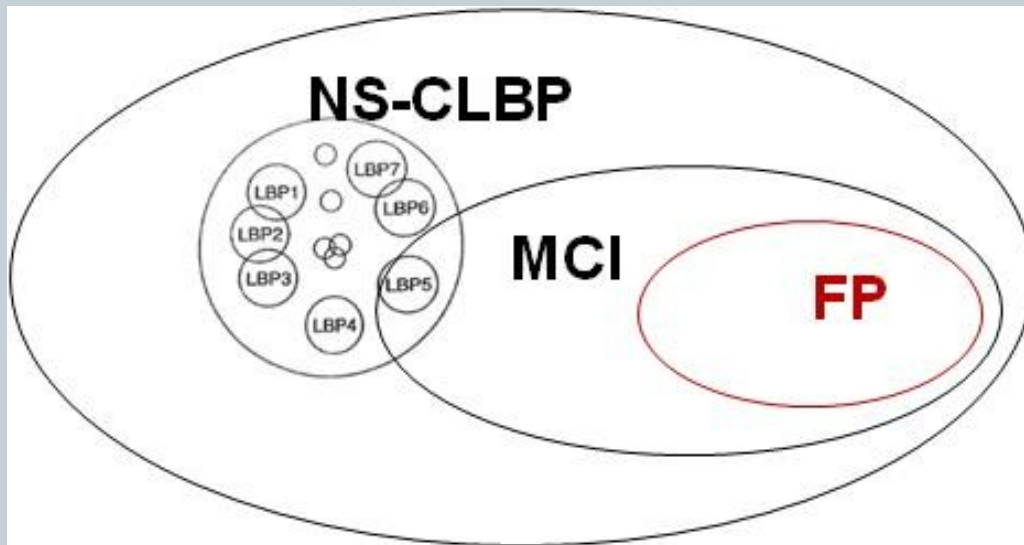
Movement impairment
(directional subgroups)

- Motor learning within cognitive framework
(enhance movement / relaxation)
- Functional restoration
- +/- medical

Motor Control Impairment subclassification

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- = a maladaptive pattern of movement or posturing of the spine that results in excessive tissue strain



NS-CLBP



MCI

localised mechanically induced



no (segmental) movement impairment in direction of pain



central pain drivers can co-exist: eg cognitive factors (fear avoidance behaviours, poor coping strategies, ...)

absence of dominant 'psycho-social' features

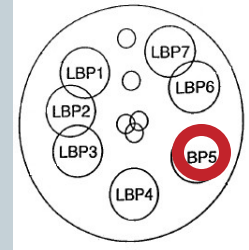


dominant peripherally mediated pain

Motor Control Impairment subclassification

20

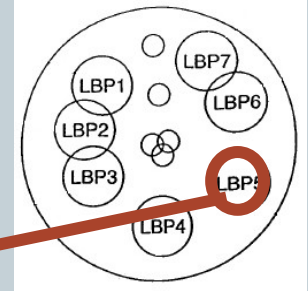
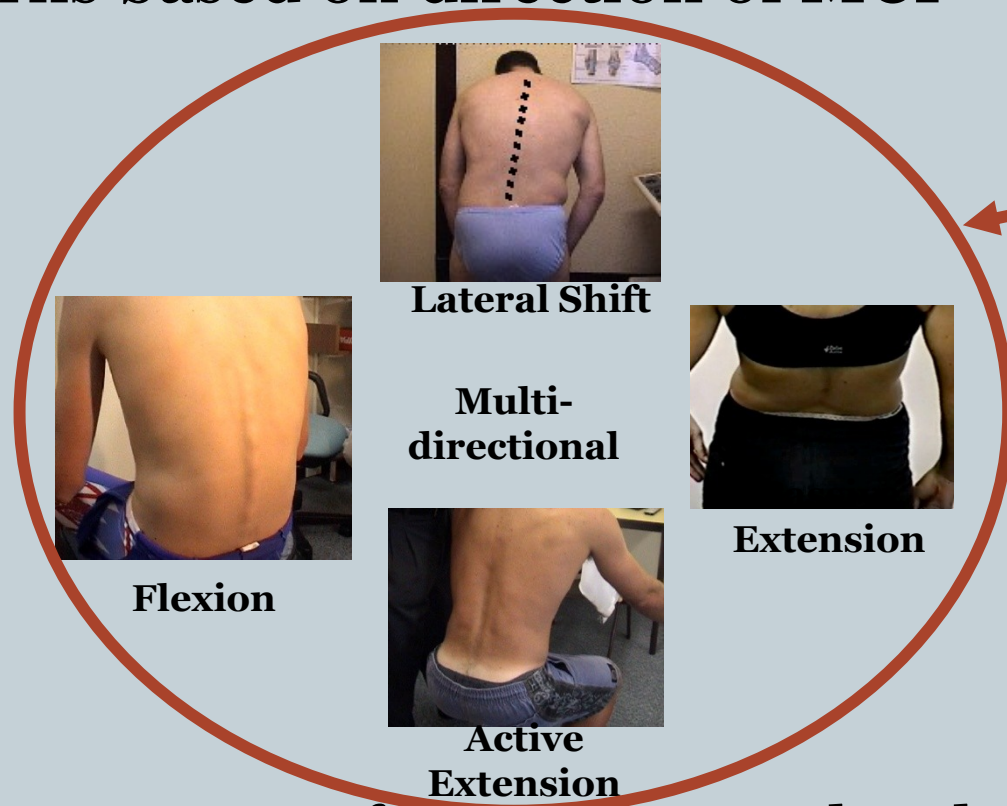
- Localised mechanically induced NSCLBP
- Absence of dominant ‘psycho-social’ features
- No segmental movement impairment in the direction of pain
- Impairment in spinal control provokes and maintains pain state
- Normalizing control impairment leads to resolution of disorder



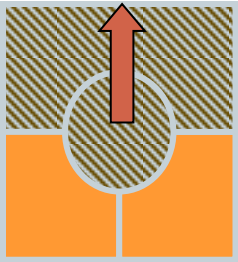
Motor Control Impairment subclassification

21

- 5 patterns based on direction of MCI



- distinct patterns of altered MCI closely linked to patient's pain behaviour

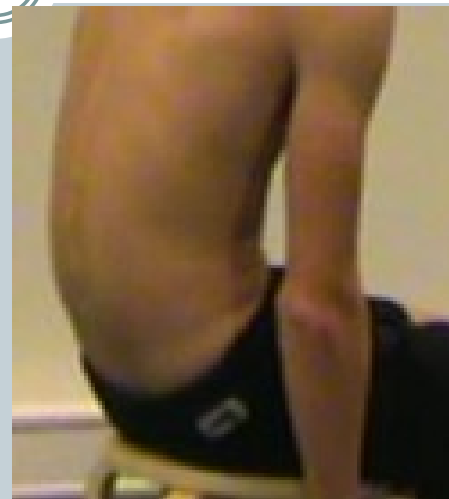


Flexion Pattern

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- Most common
- Loss of segmental Lumbar (Lx) lordosis into flexion
- Position in more end-range flexion
- Posterior pelvic tilt
- Repetitive and sustained near end-range flexion strain
- Provocation: flexion and flexion/rotation activities and postures
- Reduction: lordotic/extended postures (lumbar roll/McKenzie ext)
- Inability to independently (from Tx) anterior rotate & extend lower Lx - generate control from Tx





Flexion Pattern

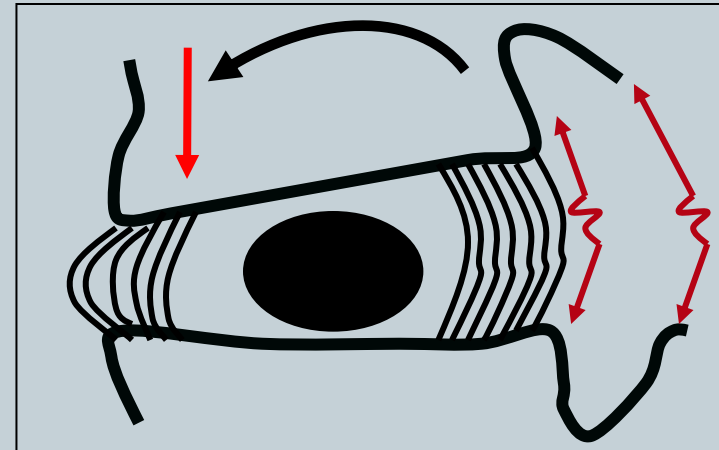
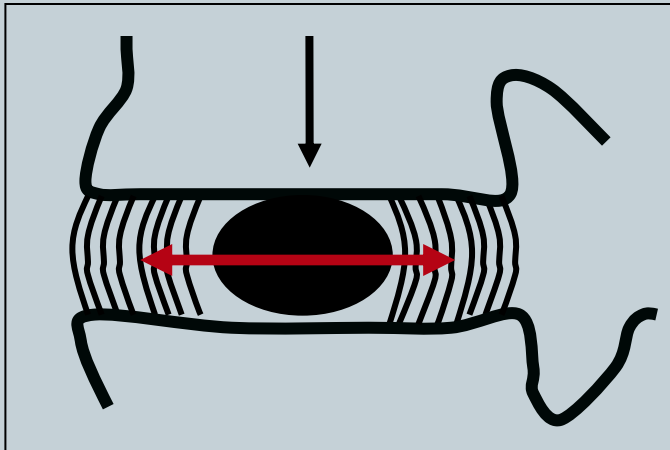
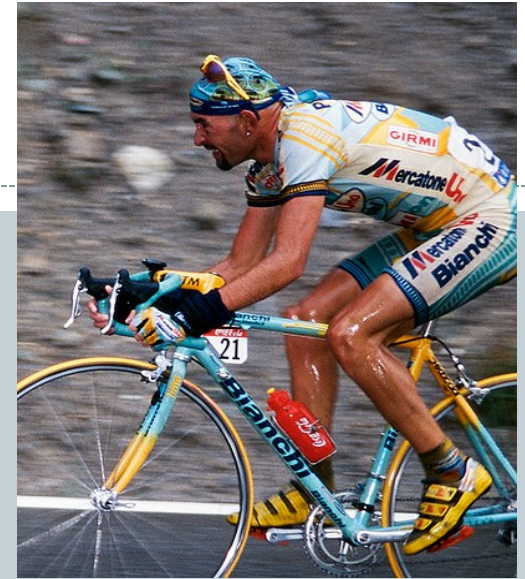
24



- Most common presentation
- Repetitive Flexion strain / might have had flexion injury
- Provocation: flexion and flexion/rotation activities and postures
- Reduction: lordotic/extended postures (lumbar roll/McKenzie ext)
- PE:
 - loss of segmental lordosis into flexion (sitting, standing, bending)
 - increased upper Lx lordosis / or total flexion
 - posterior pelvic tilt
 - segmental 'drop' into flexion (kyphosis) when forward bending
- Inability to independently (from Tx) anterior rotate & extend lower Lx - generate control from Tx
- (may be 'stiff' into extension – movement impairment)

Intervertebral disc

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Do cyclists
with LBP
commonly
present with
this FP LBP
disorder?



Available online at www.sciencedirect.com



Manual Therapy 9 (2004) 211–219

Original article

Spinal kinematics and trunk muscle activity in cyclists: a comparison between healthy controls and non-specific chronic low back pain subjects—a pilot investigation

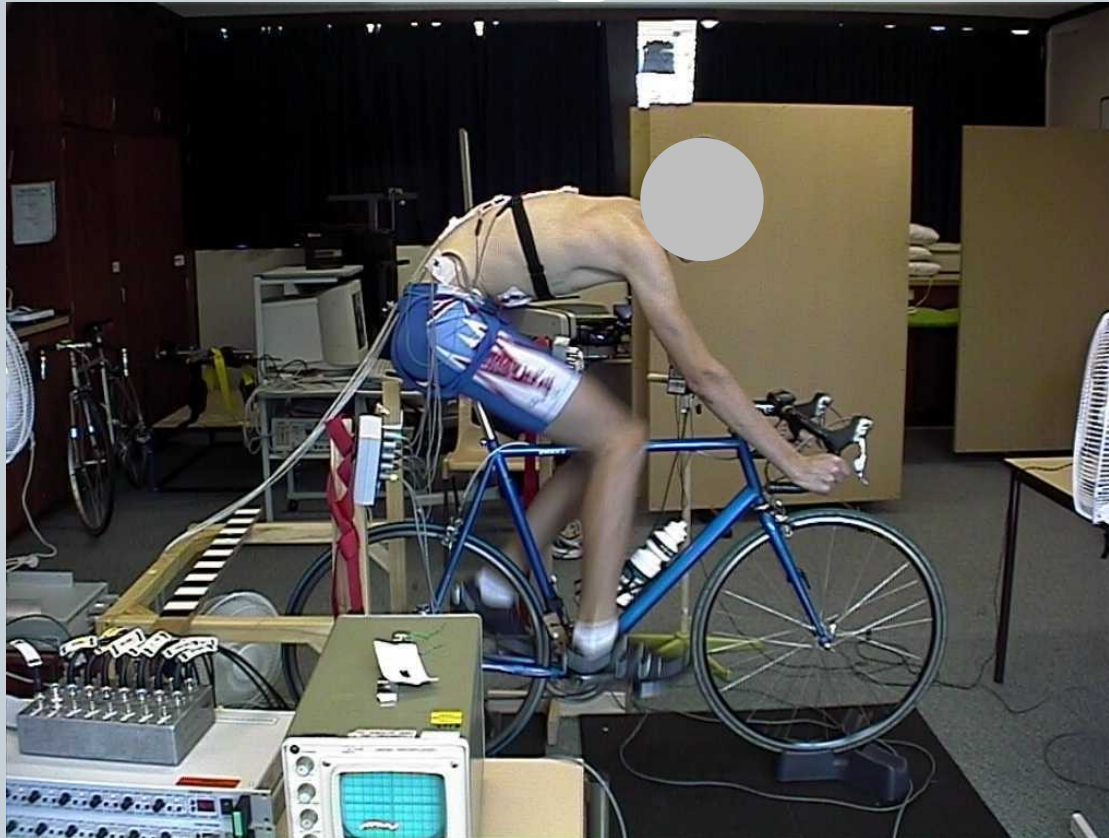
Angus F. Burnett^{a,*}, Mary W. Cornelius^a, Wim Dankaerts^{b,c}, Peter B. O'Sullivan^b

^a*School of Biomedical and Sports Science, Edith Cowan University, 100 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup, 6027 Western Australia, Australia*

^b*School of Physiotherapy, Curtin University of Technology, Western Australia, Australia*

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Received 17 July 2003; received in revised form 31 March 2004; accepted 28 June 2004



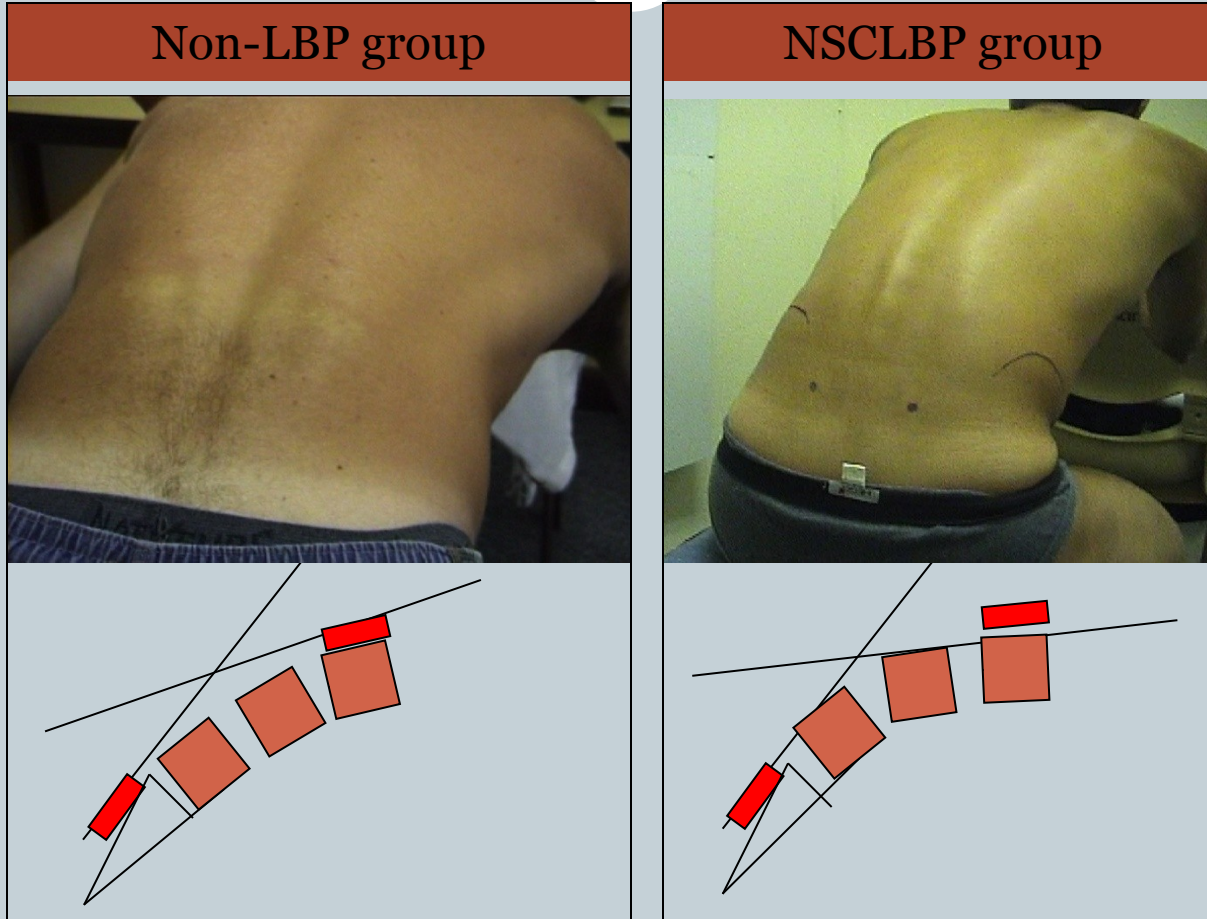
NSCLBP

Non-LBP matched subjects

@start no pain - cycling - till pain

Results – LLx kinematics - Flexion (S2-L3)

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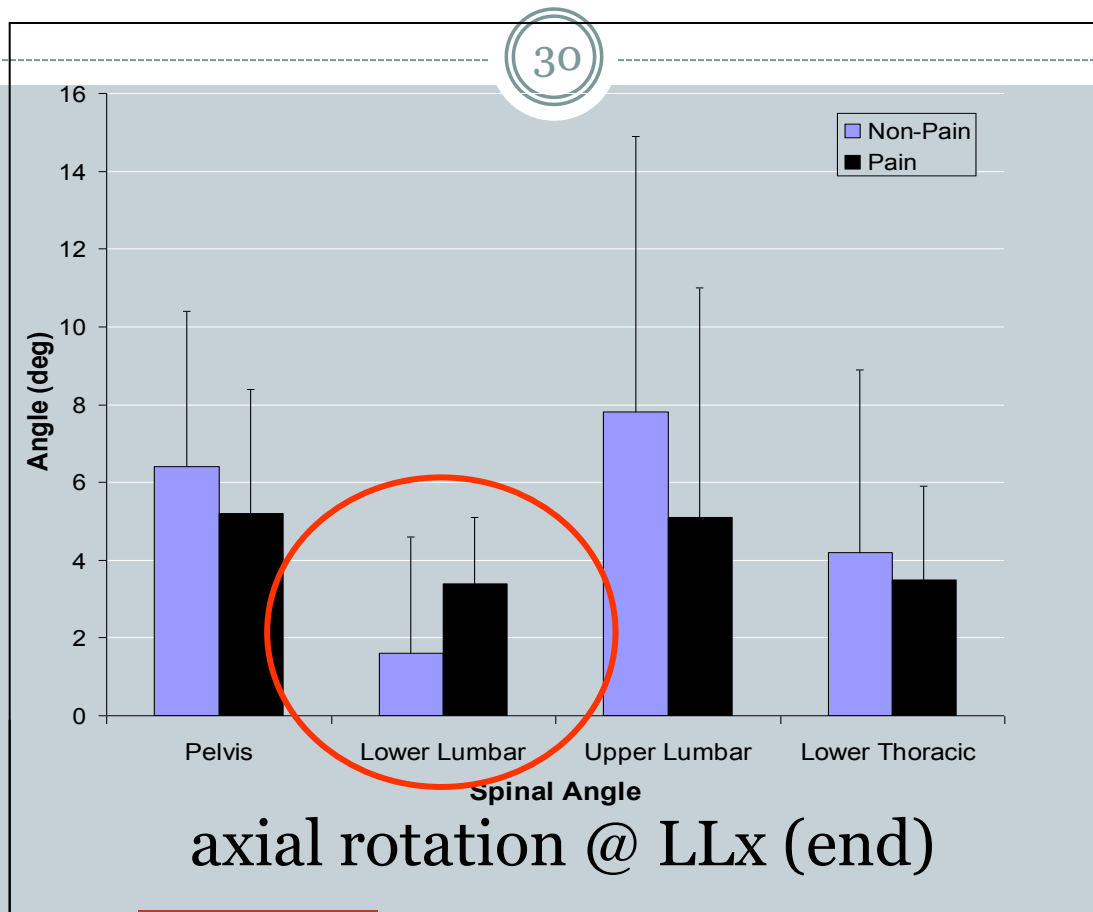
@start
@end

25.1 ° ±19.8°
24.9 ° ±20.2°

38.6 ° (±19.0 °)
38.6 ° (±19.9 °)

[Burnett et al 2004]

Results – LLx kinematics - Axial rotation (S2-L3)



Non-LBP

NSCLBP

@start

2.2 ° ±0.9°

3.4 ° (±1.8 °)

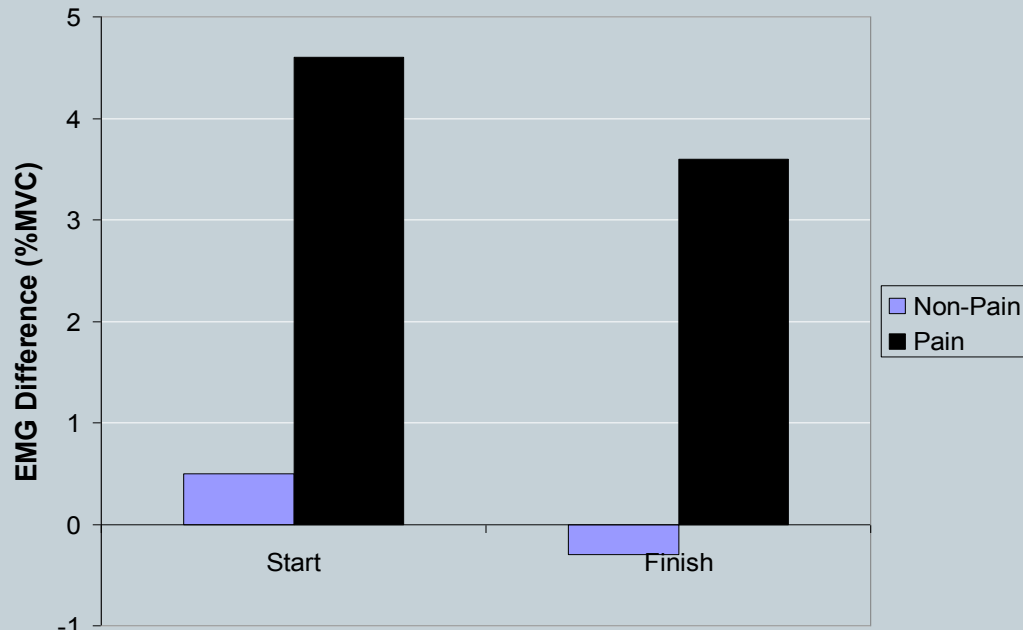
@end

1.6 ° ±3.0°

3.4 ° (±1.7 °)

Results – sEMG

31



difference L vs. R lumbar multifidus

	Non-LBP	NSCLBP
@start	0.5 ° ±3.0°	4.6 ° (±7.1 °)
@end	-0.3° ±2.2°	3.6 ° (±5.7 °)

[Burnett et al 2004]

- **NSCLBP (FP) cyclists demonstrated:**
 - Increased flexion/rotation strain across the lower lumbar spine
 - Loss of LM co-contraction
 - Clinically linked with the development of LBP

Difference in LLx kinematics during cycling?

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Manual Therapy 17 (2012) 312–317



Contents lists available at SciVerse ScienceDirect

Manual Therapy

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/math



Original article

Comparing lower lumbar kinematics in cyclists with low back pain (flexion pattern) versus asymptomatic controls – field study using a wireless posture monitoring system

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^a *Musculoskeletal Research Unit, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, Faculty of Kinesiology and Rehabilitation sciences, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Tervuursevest 101, B-3001 Leuven, Belgium*

^b *Department of Physiotherapy, Faculty of Education and Health Sciences, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland*

Material & Methods (1)

- 8 NSCLBP (FP) subjects vs. 9 healthy controls
- Subjects performed a 2-h outdoor cycling task on a standard flat parcours on their personal race bike
- Heart rate between 60 and 70% of their age-predicted maximum throughout the cycling task

	Age (y)	Weight (kg)	Height (cm)	BMI (kg/m ²)	Average pain (NPRS;0 -10) 4w prior (cycling)	Average pain (NPRS;0 -10) 4w prior (ADL)	Years of cycling	Saddle angle (°)
LBP (n=8)	28.3 (8.7)	76.2 (8.5)	184.9 (4.1)	22.3 (2.7)	5.6 (1.2)	3.3 (1.8)	7.3 (2.5)	-0.1* (2.9)
non-LBP (n=9)	28.4 (9)	75.1 (7.7)	181.2 (2.7)	22.8 (1.9)	0	0	8.4 (5.1)	2.2 (2.6)

Baseline characteristics of both the NSCLBP(FP) and non-LBP group. Values are mean (±SD); BMI: Body Mass Index; NPRS: Numerical Pain Rating Scale; w: weeks; *negative value indicates the degrees above 90°; differences between group in age, weight, height or BMI were all p>0.05.

Material & Methods (2)

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• Instrumentation

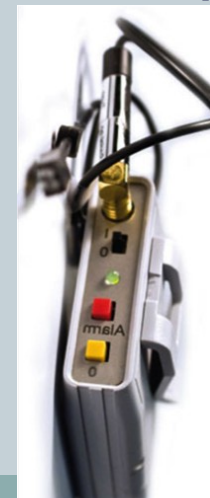
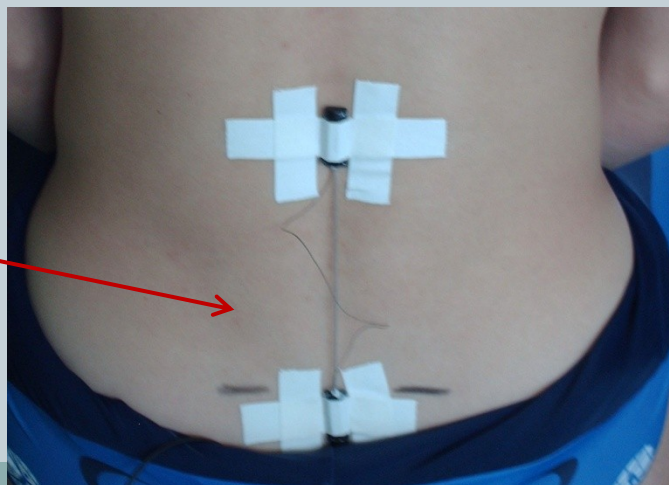
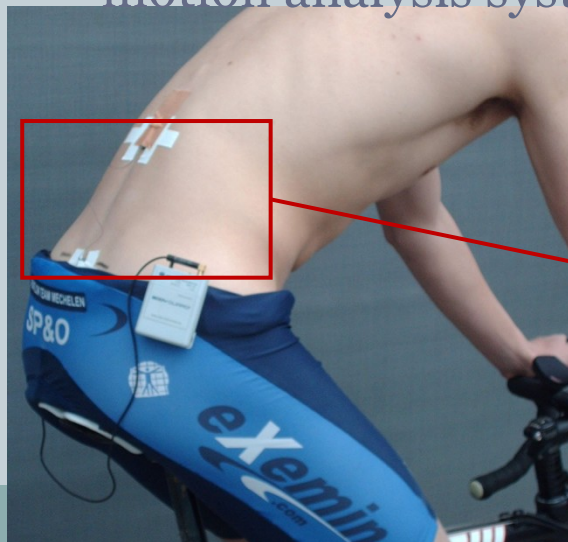
○ The Bodyguard™ (BG) (Sels Instruments nv, Belgium)

- ✦ The LLx kinematics was expressed as a % of total lumbo-pelvic flexion (% FL ROM).

- Excellent intra- and inter-rater reliability [O'Sullivan et al. 2011]

- ICC values: 0.837-0.874 and 0.914-0.940 respectively

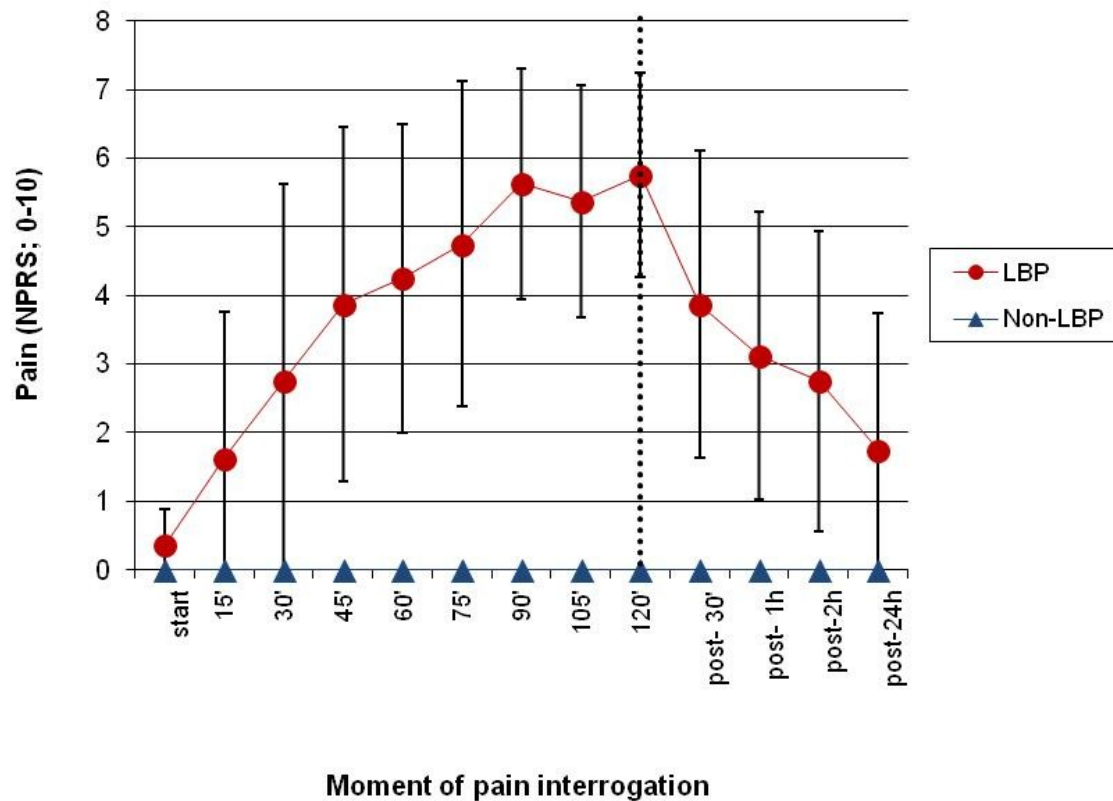
- Strong correlation ($r=0.8$) with laboratory laboratory-based motion analysis system (CODA) (Charnwood Dynamics Ltd, Leicestershire UK) [O'Sullivan et al. 2012]



[Van Hoof et al 2012]

Results (1)

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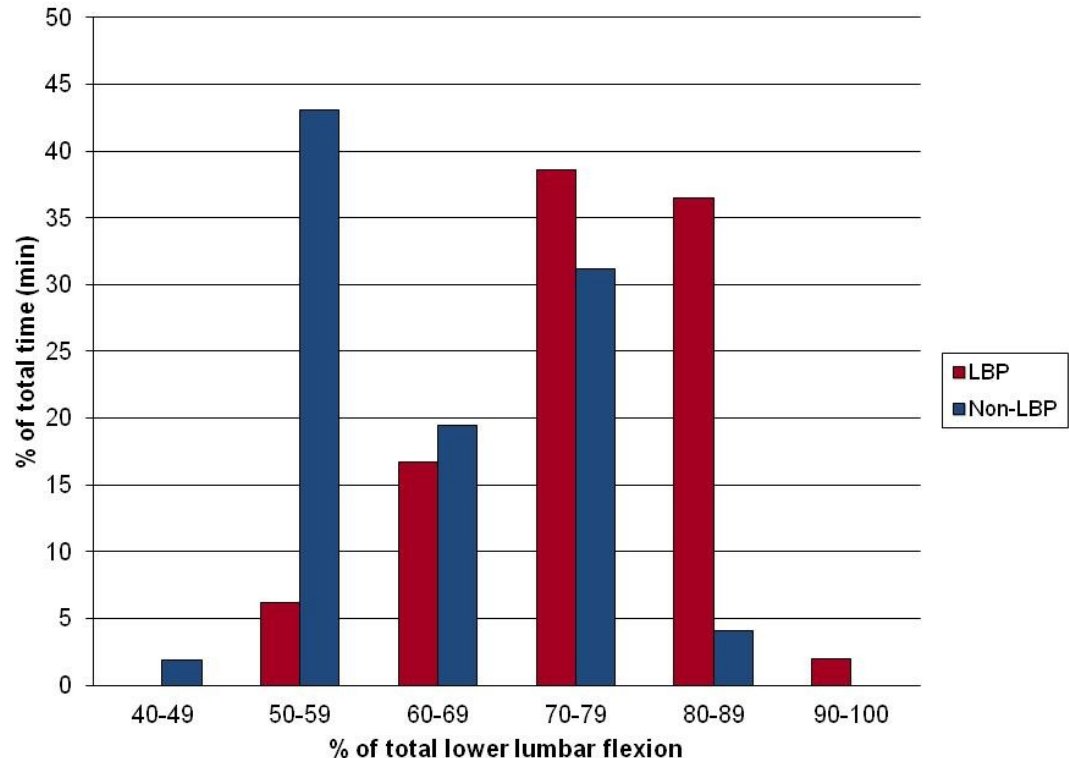
$p < 0.001$

The average pain scores (NPRS; 0-10) (\pm SD) during and after cycling per group. The vertical dotted black line indicates the end of the cycling task and the start of the 24h follow-up period. NPRS: Numerical Pain Rating Scale; LBP: low back pain; Non-LBP: no low back pain; h: hour.

Results (2)

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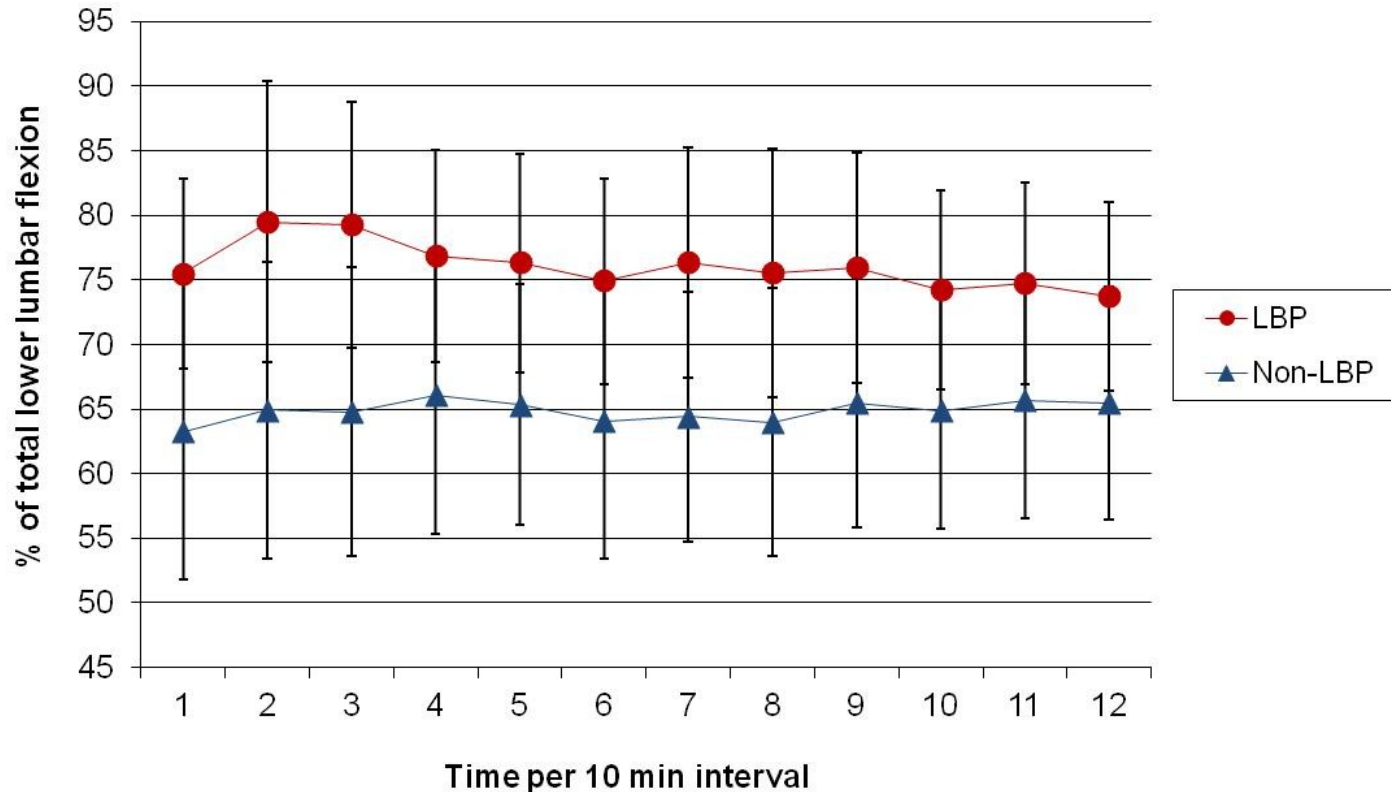
- The **mean percentage of total lower lumbar flexion** was significantly increased in the LBP group ($74.1 \pm 7.9\%$ Fl ROM) compared to the non-LBP group ($63.6 \pm 9.8\%$ Fl ROM) ($p = 0.018$).
- NSCLBP (FP) cyclists spend on average more than **38.5%** of their total cycling time in an end-range posture **exceeding 80% of total LLx flexion**, in contrast to only 4% for the non-LBP group.



Time (min) expressed as a % of the total two hours cycling period spent in the available lower lumbar flexion ROM (expressed as a % of the total lower lumbar flexion ROM). LBP: low back pain; Non-LBP: no low back pain.

Results (3)

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Percentage of total lower lumbar flexion (\pm SD) over entire period per 12 intervals of ten minutes per group. LBP: low back pain; Non-LBP: no low back pain.

NSCLBP (FP) group exhibiting significantly greater LLx flexion ($p = 0.035$) remaining just significant when adding saddle angle as a covariate ($p = 0.05$)

What is
underlying
cycling related
NSCLBP?

Underlying mechanism?

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Underlying mechanism?

41



How end range?

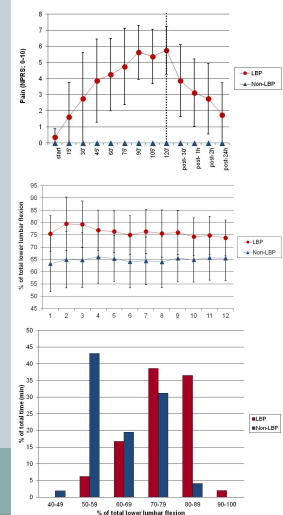
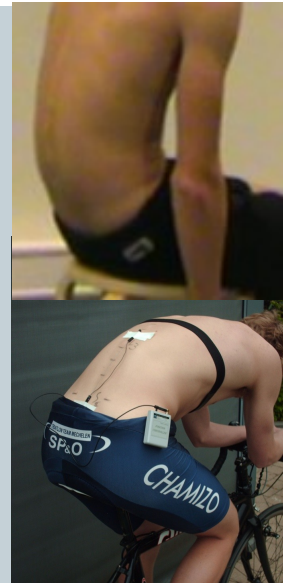
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Underlying mechanism in cyclists with NSCLBP

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- Inherent maladaptive motor control impairment at the lower lumbar spine
- Adopt and sustain an increased LLx flexion during cycling
- Maladaptive more flexed posture is maintained and associated with a significant increase of LBP
- Underscores previous findings in other sporting activities such as rowing



Etiology - pathomechanism

44

- Based on non-cycling biomechanical laboratory studies
 - Intersegmental forces transferred through the Fl/Rotated TxLx spine
 - Flexion-relaxation phenomenon
 - Mechanical-creep effect
 - Sustained forward flexion during cycling - increases the risk of tissue irritation or damage (disc ischemia)
 - (Excessive muscle activation - increased tissue strain across the lumbar spine)

O'Sullivan et al., 2006

Etiology - pathomechanism

45

- Based on non-cycling biomechanical laboratory studies

As a consequence of adopting and sustaining more end-range lower lumbar flexion during cycling, resulting from a maladaptive control impairment (e.g. FP), all these mechanisms can (individually or together) play an important role in the provocation of LBP during cycling through overloading the spinal structures

O'Sullivan et al., 2006

How successfully
are we in
managing
cycling related
LBP?

“Without identification of the underlying mechanism(s) the optimum treatment strategy for the patient’s pain can not be selected...”

Woolf & Manion 1999

Managing cycling related LBP

48

- LBP during cycling is related to maladaptive lower lumbar kinematics
- Trying to regain control over the lower lumbar region during cycling could be relevant in the rehabilitation/prevention of LBP in this subgroup

Managing
LBP in cycling

```
graph LR; A[Managing LBP in cycling] --- B[Personal modifiable factors]; A --- C[Non-personal modifiable factors];
```

Personal
modifiable
factors

Non-personal
modifiable
factors

Managing
LBP in cycling

```
graph LR; A[Managing LBP in cycling] --- B[Personal modifiable factors]; A --- C[Non-personal modifiable factors];
```

The diagram illustrates the components of managing low back pain (LBP) in cycling. A central box on the left, titled 'Managing LBP in cycling', is connected by dashed lines to two boxes on the right: 'Personal modifiable factors' and 'Non-personal modifiable factors'. The 'Non-personal modifiable factors' box is highlighted with a blue oval.

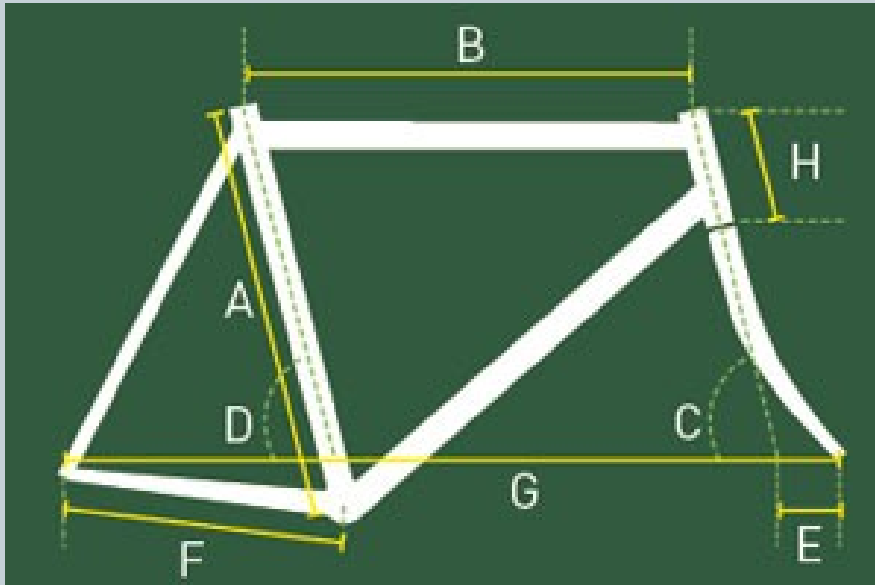
Personal
modifiable
factors

Non-personal
modifiable
factors

Non-personal modifiable factors

51

- Incorrect bicycle set-up
- Type of bike



- Positioning of hands on handlebars
- Low gear usage



Non-personal modifiable factors

52

- Incorrect bicycle set-up
- Type of bike
- Saddle angle
- Type of saddle
- Saddle height
- Reach
- Pedal unit position
- Positioning of hands on handlebars
- Low gear usage

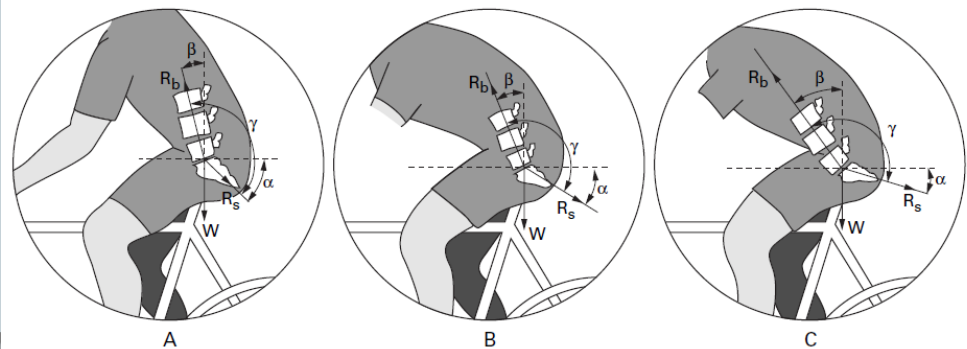


Figure 1 Lateral pelvic/spine schema drawn from radiographs taken while the subject was sitting on various bicycles with various body positions, showing the related force vectors at the promontorium. W ; weight; R_s ; lumbar vector; R_b ; pelvic vector; α , angle between ground and R_s vector; β ; angle between weight axis and R_s vector; γ ; lumbosacral/pelvic angle. (A) Town bike; (B) mountain bike; (C) racing bike.

Non-personal modifiable factors

- Incorrect bicycle set-up
- Type of bike
- Saddle angle
- Type of saddle
- Saddle height
- Reach
- Pedal unit position
- Positioning of hands on handle
- Low gear usage

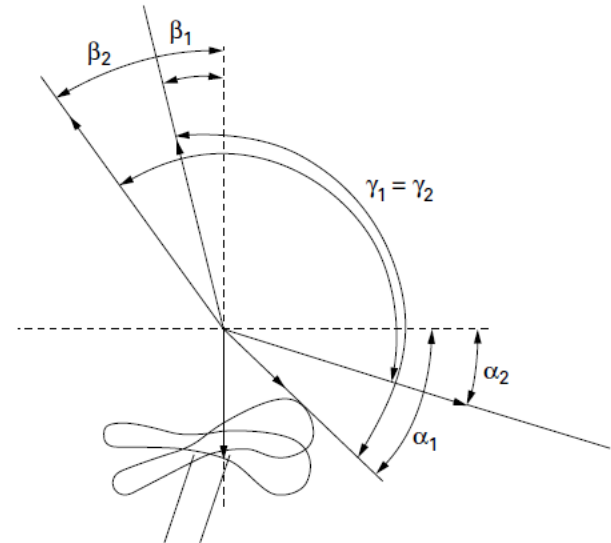


Figure 2 Changing the seat angle from horizontal to an anterior inclination causes the α angle to decrease ($\alpha_2 < \alpha_1$); the γ angle remains constant ($\gamma_1 = \gamma_2$) and the β angle increases ($\beta_2 > \beta_1$).

Table 1 Effect of α angle on the R_b to R_s ratio

α	R_b/R_s	R_s (W)	R_b (W)
0	1.22	1.43	1.74
10	1.39	1.24	1.72
20	1.64	1.00	1.64
30	2.05	0.74	1.52
40	2.96	0.45	1.33

α angle, the angle between the saddle and ground; R_b/R_s , tensile vectors acting on the promontorium: R_b , upward vector; R_s , downward vector.

Non-personal modifiable factors

54

- Incorrect bicycle set-up
- Type of bike
- Saddle angle
- Type of saddle

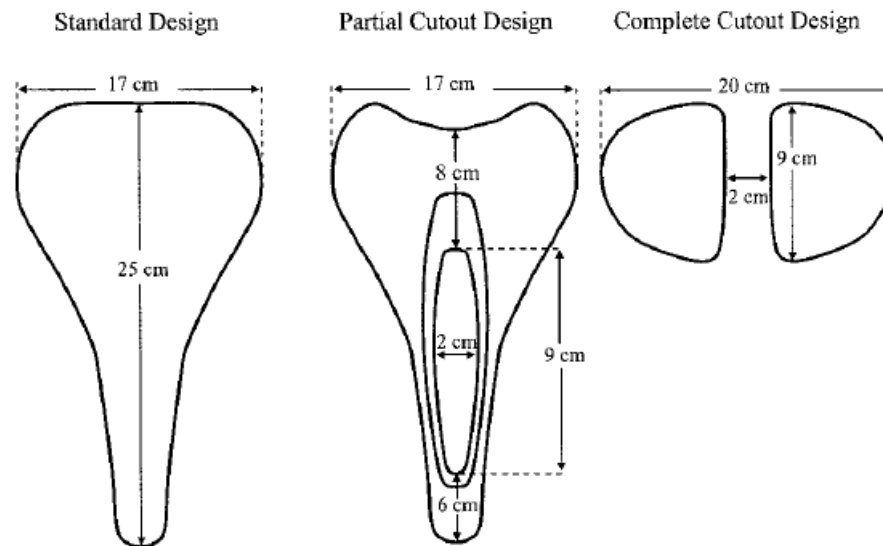
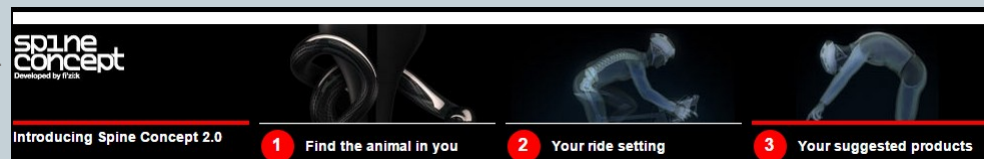
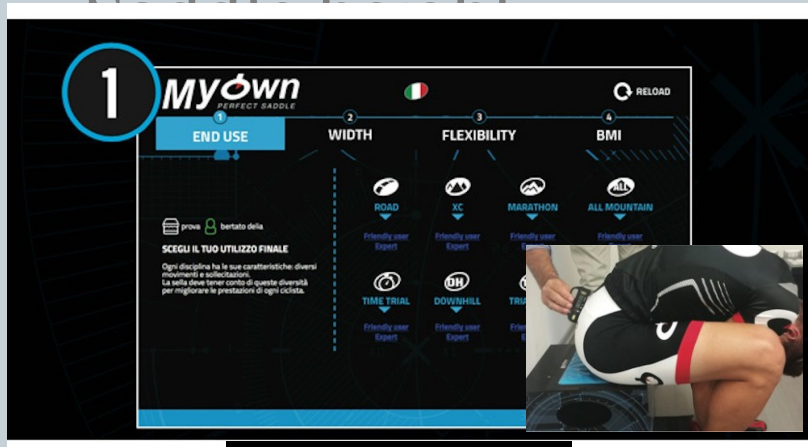


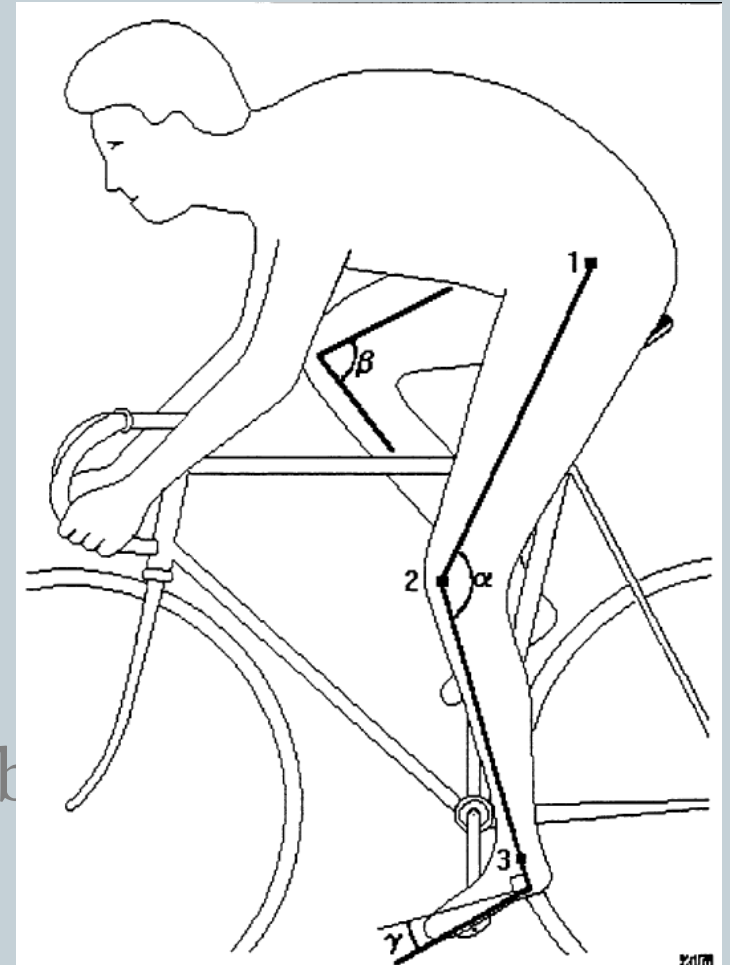
FIGURE 1—A top view of the three saddle designs and their physical dimensions.



Non-personal modifiable factors

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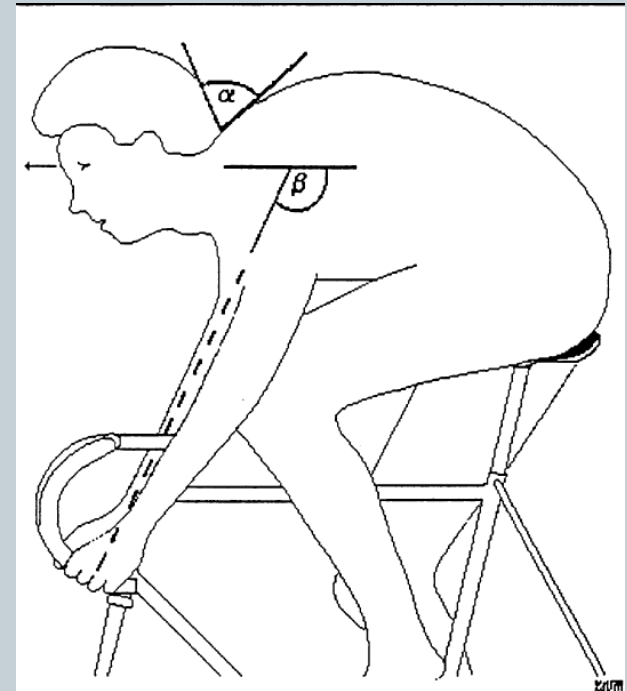
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- Low gear usage



Non-personal modifiable factors

56

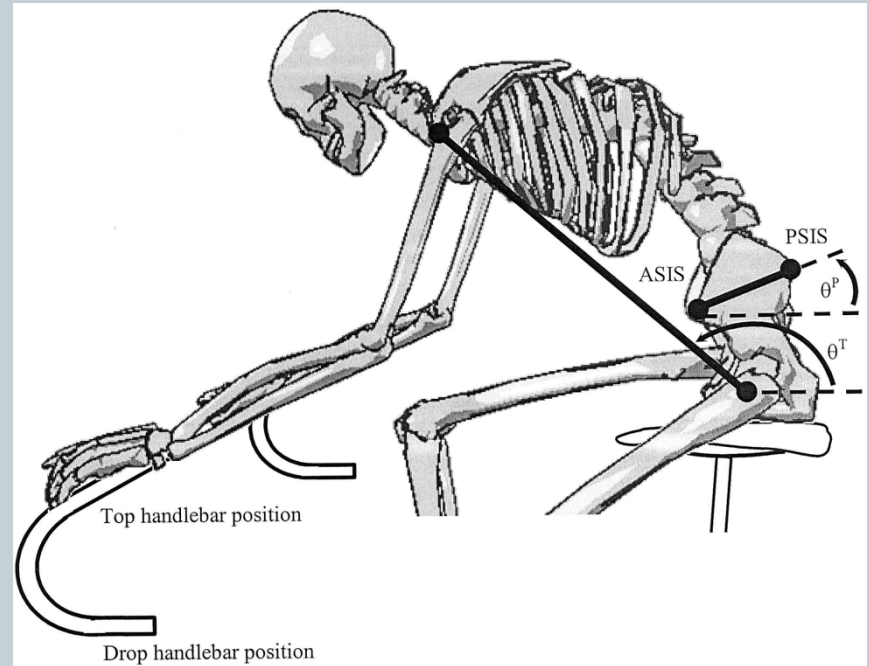
- Incorrect bicycle set-up
- Type of bike
- Saddle angle
- Type of saddle
- Saddle height
- Reach
- Pedal unit position
- Positioning of hands on handlebars
- Low gear usage



Non-personal modifiable factors

57

- Incorrect bicycle set-up
- Type of bike
- Saddle angle
- Type of saddle
- Saddle height
- Reach
- Pedal unit position
- Positioning of hands on handlebars
- Low gear usage



Non-personal modifiable factors

58

- Proper frame size and bike set-up is important
- All these geometric bike related variables can have an influence on the LLx kinematics during cycling

Non-personal modifiable factors

59

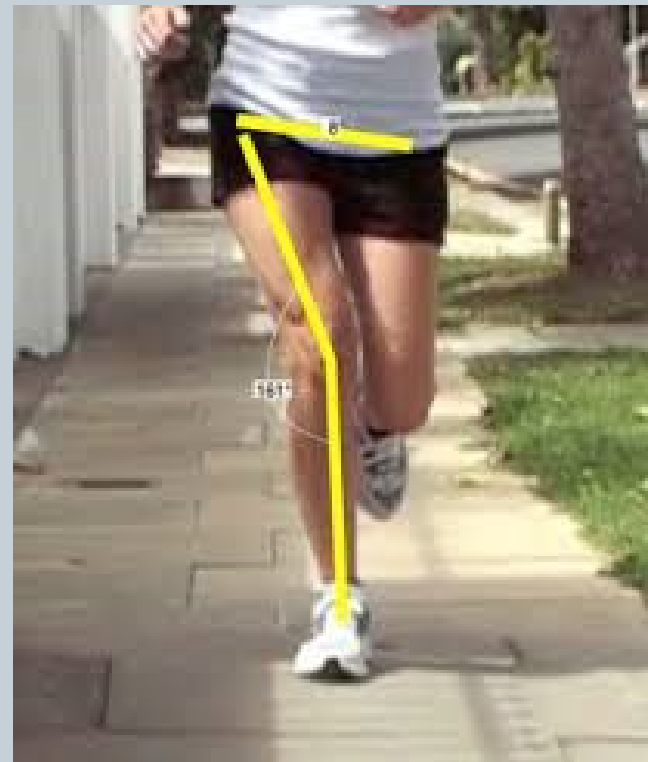
- Proper frame size and bike set-up is important

BUT...

The way you posture yourself on the bike is at least equally important!

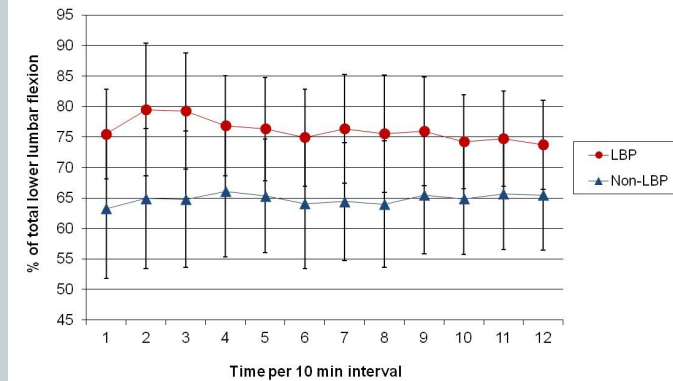
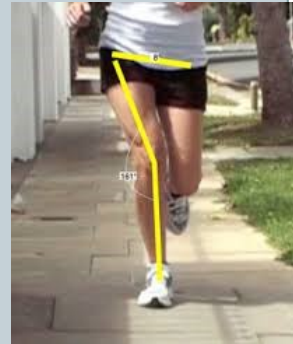
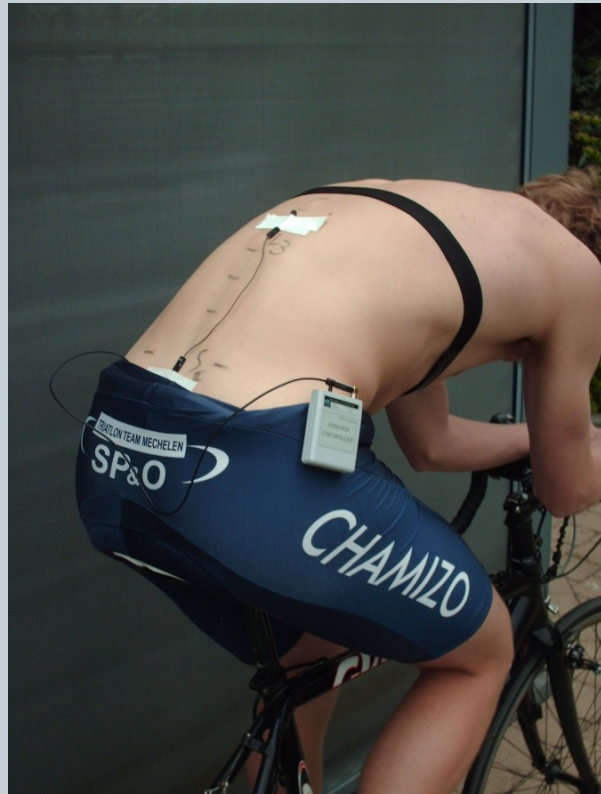
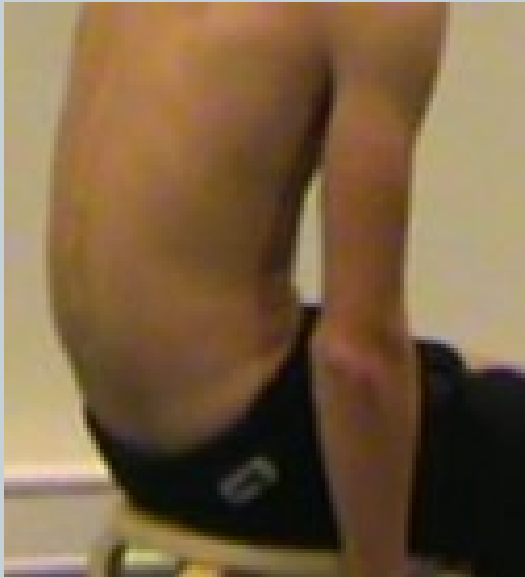
It's like a shoe...

60



Don't forget the personal factor!

61



e.g. posture- and movement behaviour

Managing
LBP in cycling

```
graph LR; A[Managing LBP in cycling] --- B[Personal modifiable factors]; A --- C[Non-personal modifiable factors];
```

The diagram consists of three red rounded rectangular boxes with dashed white borders. The leftmost box contains the text 'Managing LBP in cycling'. Two lines extend from the right side of this box to the top and bottom of two other boxes on the right. The top box contains 'Personal modifiable factors' and is highlighted with a solid teal oval. The bottom box contains 'Non-personal modifiable factors'.

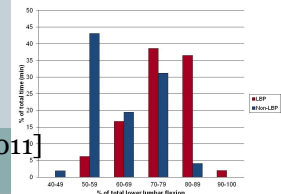
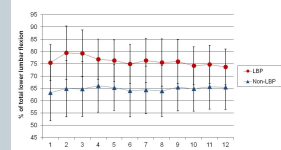
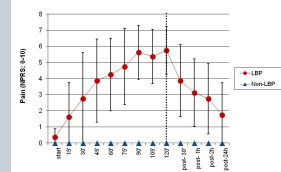
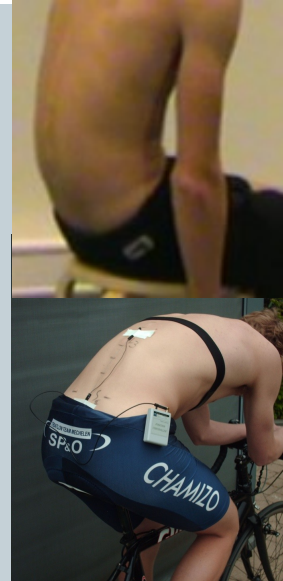
Personal
modifiable
factors

Non-personal
modifiable
factors

Personal Modifiable factors

63

- Maladaptive motor control (FP) at the lower lumbar spine resulting in a more flexed lumbo-pelvic posture during cycling
- Lack of flexibility in the hamstrings
- Decreased back muscle endurance



Managing cycling related LBP?

64

Personal modifiable factors

- Motor control impairment – FP
- Habitual sitting postures
- Lack of flexibility in the hamstrings
- Decreased back muscle endurance

Non-personal modifiable factors

- Incorrect bicycle set-up
- Type of bike
- Saddle angle
- Type of saddle
- Saddle height
- Reach
- Pedal unit position
- Positioning of hands on handlebars
- Low gear usage

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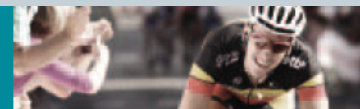
Need for
 considering
 combinations of
 personal and non-
 personal
 modifiable factors!

How successfully
are we in
managing
cycling related
LBP?

Managing cycling related LBP?

67

Sportmedische praktijk



Cognitive functional therapy intervention including biofeedback for LBP during cycling

A Single Case Study

W. Van Hoof, K. Volkaerts, K. O'Sullivan, S. Verschueren, W. Dankaerts

[Van Hoof W, Volkaerts K, O'Sullivan K, Verschueren S, Dankaerts W. Cognitive functional therapy intervention including biofeedback for LBP during cycling - a Single Case Study. Sport & Geneeskunde 2011; 44(4): 20-26.]

Cognitive Functional Therapy

68

- Alter the personal modifiable factor (maladaptive motor control)
- Specifically directed to regain motor control over the symptomatic LLx region and to facilitate a less end range flexed cycling posture
- Including biofeedback to monitor the lower lumbar kinematics
- Non-personal modifiable factors were unchanged

Cognitive Functional Therapy: steps

69

- 1. Cognitive component:**
explaining the underlying mechanism behind the patient's LBP
- 2. Motor control training:**
regain motor control over his symptomatic lumbo-pelvic region
- 3. Integration training:**
individual exercises aiming to control anterior tilting of the pelvis in different positions (sitting and in four-point kneeling).
Subject was asked to practice on a daily basis and to integrate the motor control strategies during ADL and cycling.

Cognitive Functional Therapy: steps

70

1. Cognitive component:

explaining the underlying mechanism behind the patient's LBP



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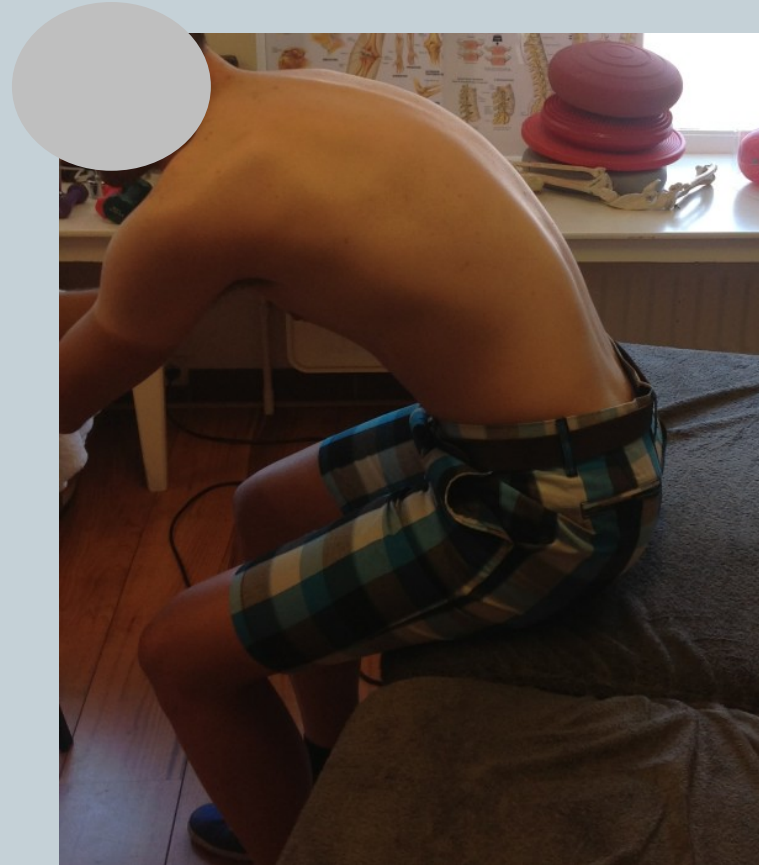
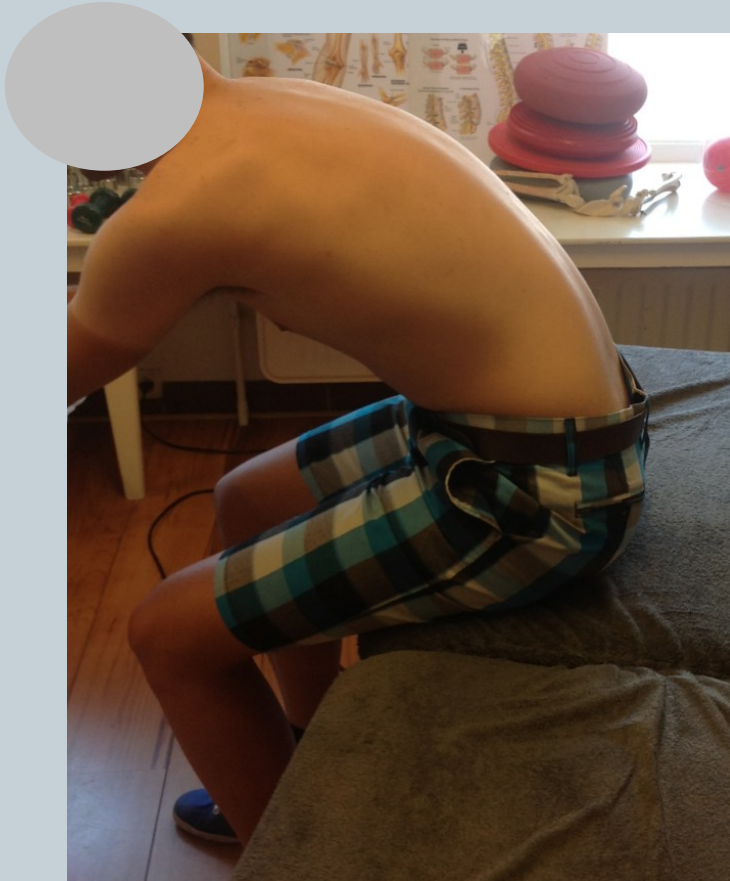
Cognitive Functional Therapy

71



Cognitive Functional Therapy

72



Cognitive Functional Therapy

73



Cognitive Functional Therapy

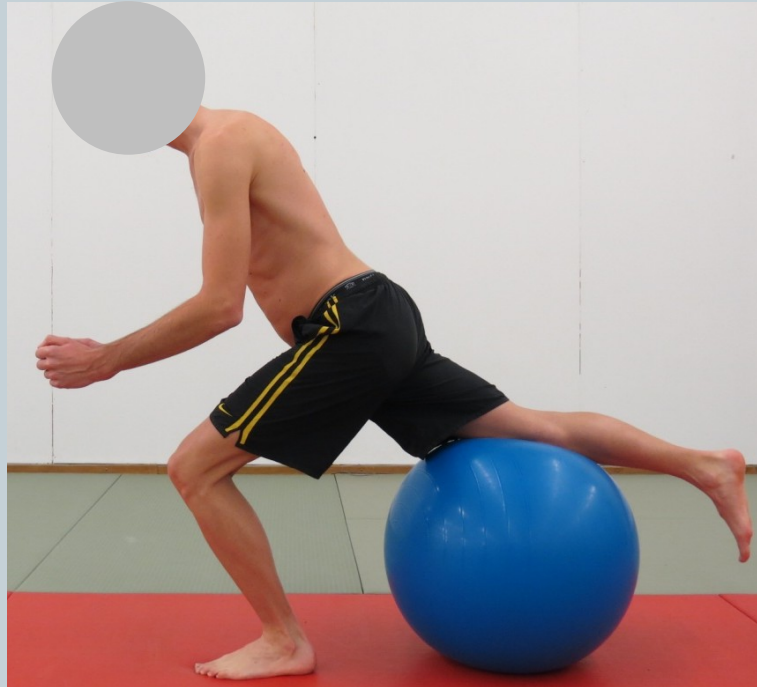
74



Cognitive Functional Therapy

75

- Glutes!



Cognitive Functional Therapy

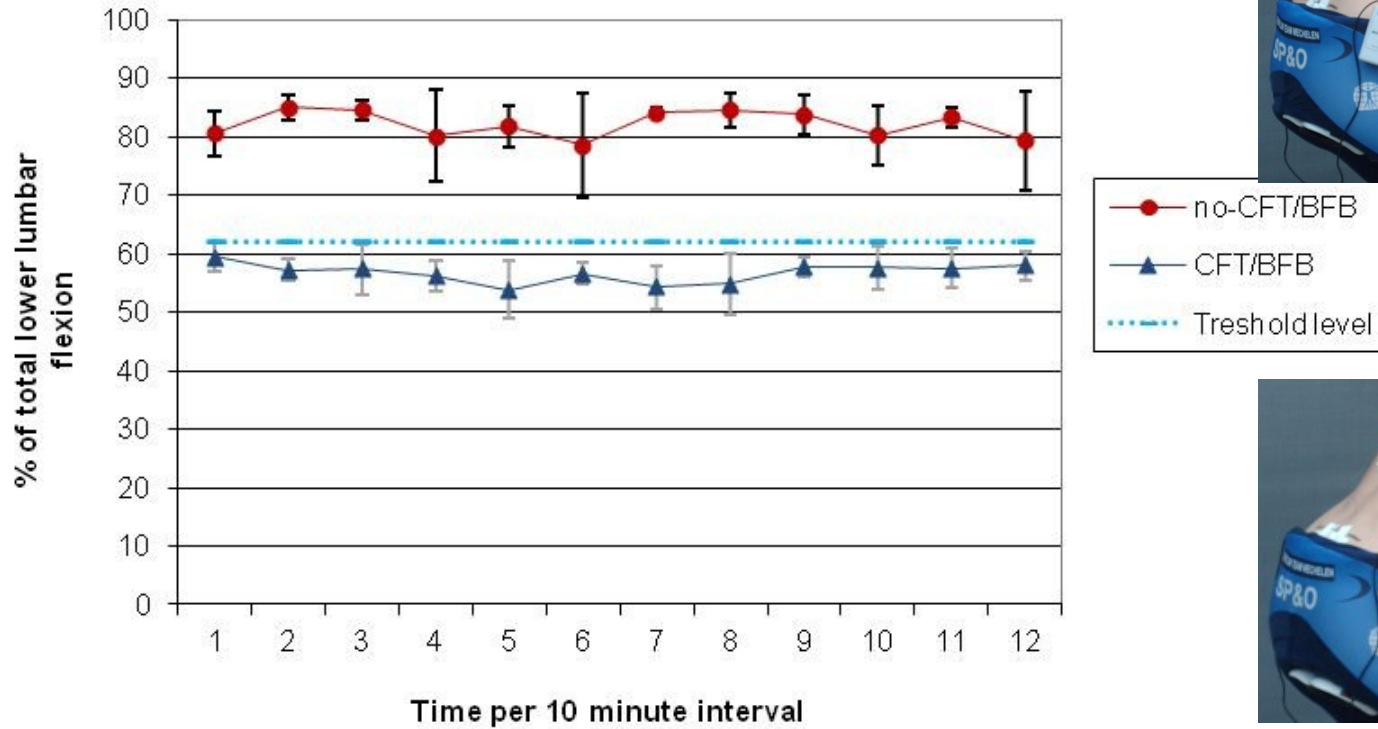
76

- Integration!



Cognitive Functional Therapy: results

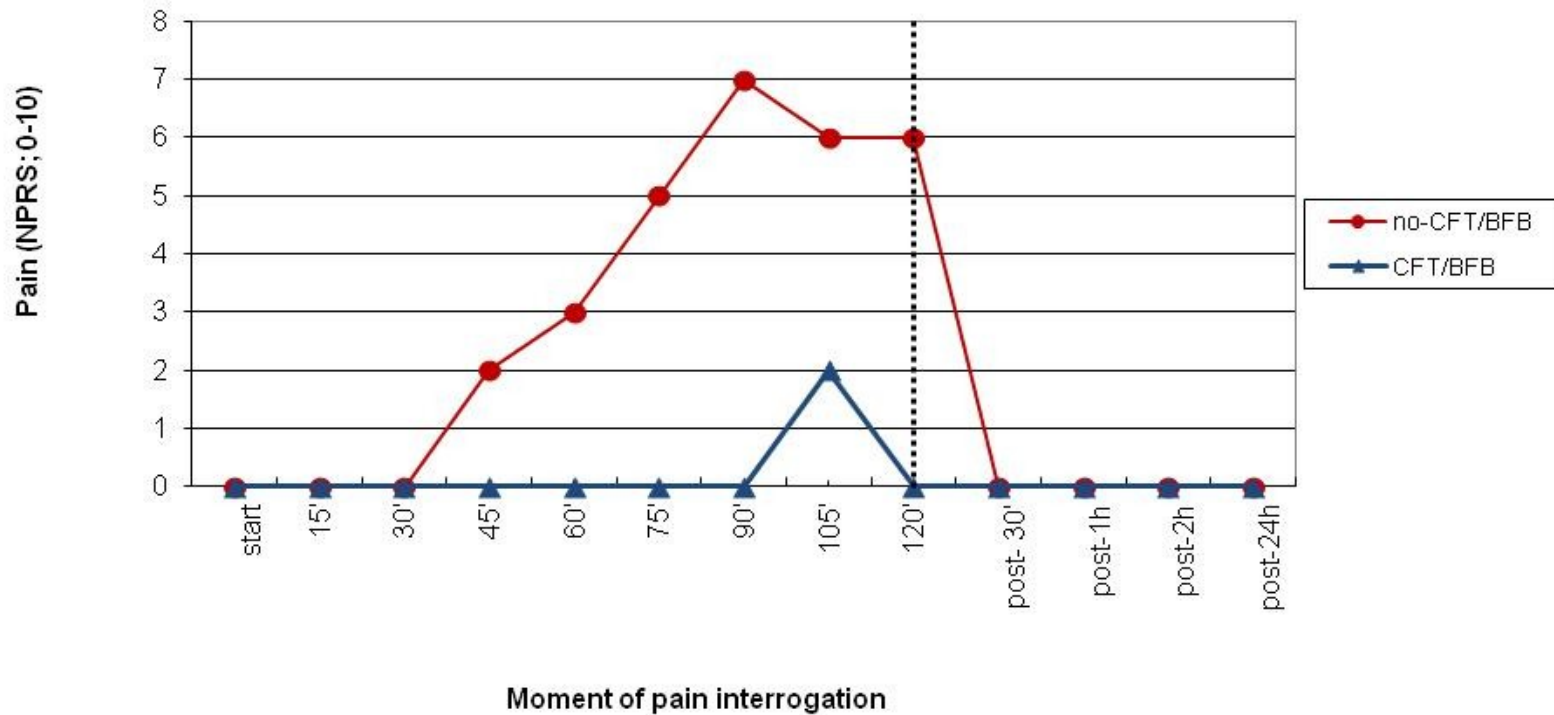
77



Percentage (\pm SD) of total lumbo-pelvic flexion (% Fl ROM) over entire period per 12 intervals of ten minutes of the LBP case subject provided with (CFT/BFB) and without CFT and BFB (no-CFT/BFB). SD: standard deviation, CFT: cognitive functional therapy, BFB: biofeedback.

Cognitive Functional Therapy: results

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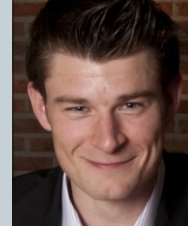
The average pain scores (NPRS; 0-10) during and after cycling of the LBP case subject provided with (CFT/BFB) and without CFT and BFB (no-CFT/BFB). Significant difference over entire two hours of cycling ($p=0.01$). The vertical dotted black line indicates the end of the two hours cycling task and the start of the 24h follow-up period. NPRS: numerical pain rating scale, ':minutes, h: hours.

Cognitive Functional Therapy: conclusion

79

- The results revealed that an intervention targeting this maladaptive control at the symptomatic lower lumbar region resulted in:
 - a significant decrease of the near end-range lower lumbar flexion (upper figure).
 - a substantial reduction of LBP during cycling (lower figure).
- Additional studies are necessary to further test this interventional approach.

- Wim Dankaerts
- Wannes Van Hoof
- Kieran O'Sullivan
- Peter O'Sullivan
- Kjartan Vibe Fersum



Questions?

