Better Back – Executive Summary

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The Better Back project - a collaboration between the Experience Labs, Active X Backs and the University of Edinburgh - used a design innovation approach to investigate ways to enhance the lives of people with lower back pain, and to assist clinicians in improving advice given to patients.

Based on extensive research undertaken by the project partner, Gavin Routledge of Active X Backs and Dr Claudia Pagliari of the University of Edinburgh, it was evident that there is a lack of effective solutions for people suffering from lower back pain. The condition is the single largest cause of disability and causes the UK billions of pounds in lost production every year. The insights gained helped to identify existing gaps and barriers.

A series of Experience Labs were designed using a design innovation process including problem identification; the development of user journeys; and prototyping, in order to define and develop various elements of the required user experience. These sessions allowed the team to gather insights from patients and clinicians. The team then refined and developed the ideas generated, ensuring that the resulting solution is grounded in patients' needs.

The project was driven by two complementary practices: exploratory co-design sessions with sufferers of lower back pain and the project partners; and the team's own design research and concept development. A key part of the project was the creation of a prototype, which participants were able to test and provide feedback on during the third Experience Lab.

Based on the findings from the Labs, a number of areas were identified as suitable for further research and development, including: creation of an integrated system that learns and adapts; wearable sensors; ideas for the user interface; and a system that provides feedback.