

Introduction

Persistent pain affects nearly one-third of the global population, but is poorly addressed in healthcare (Legueux et al., 2018). Significant gaps exist between healthcare provider education, clinical practice, and the lived experience of individuals with persistent pain (Ashcraft et al., 2024; Loeser & Schatman, 2017; Saif et al., 2024). A needs assessment, conducted with persistent pain lived experience experts, and an in-depth literature review show that contributing factors include low institutional priority, lack of standard curricular requirements, stigma and bias, inconsistent reimbursement, and limited integration of lived experience (Leach et al., 2023).

This project was completed in partnership with Pain Coach, a South-African based organization run by Dershnee Devan, BOT, MSc Med, that provides persistent pain rehabilitation and professional training. Pain Coach's mission - to overcome barriers in understanding pain - made an ideal partner for developing an educational module rooted in lived experience.



Pain Coach disseminates online persistent pain education to healthcare providers globally.

Project Description

This project focused on integrating lived experience perspectives into persistent pain education for healthcare providers. Over 12 weeks, qualitative interviews with lived experience experts and a targeted literature review informed the development of a new educational module for Pain Coach's professional training program. The module addresses key themes identified through the needs assessment.

The project aligns with HPU OTD's curricular threads and core values.

Aloha - compassion, empathy, & respect for individuals living with persistent pain	Kuleana - knowledge translation & elevating patient voices	Pono - ethical, equitable module development	Kokua - educational resources to help providers better serve their communities	Laulima - teamwork with Pain Coach, lived experience experts, & faculty
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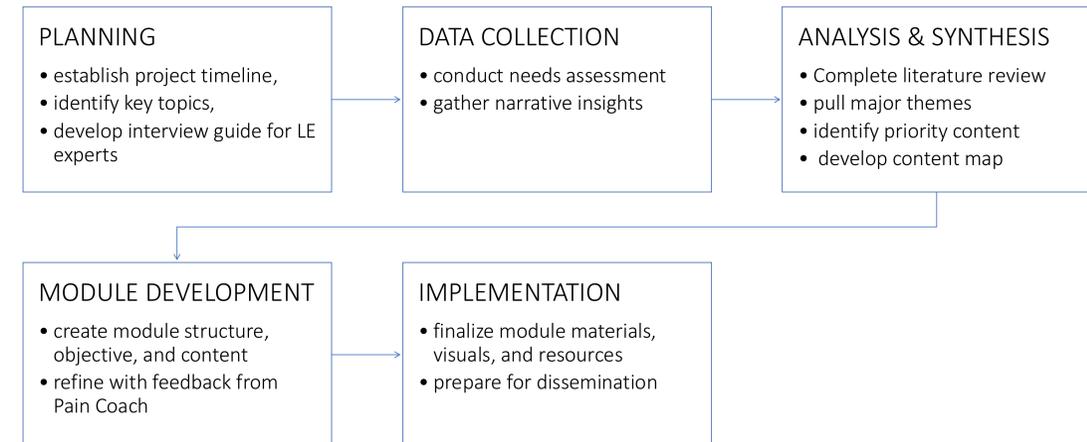
Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this project was to address the gap in persistent pain care by learning from and integrating the lived experience.

Primary Aims:

- Identify gaps between current pain education, best practice, and patient experience through a literature review.
- Engage with lived experience experts to understand barriers and needs.
- Structure and develop a lived-experience-centered education module for Pain Coach.

Methods



Outcomes

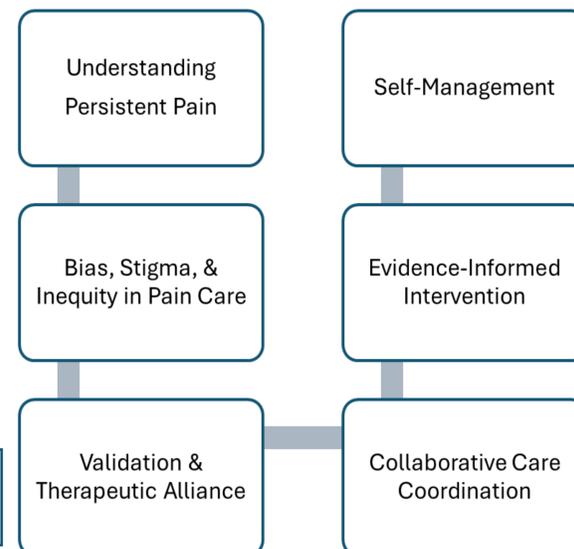
The project resulted in a lived-experience-informed persistent pain education module that will be formally integrated into Pain Coach's professional training curriculum. The final deliverable is a 7-hour, six-unit synchronous module that includes video instruction, patient and provider narratives, and lived-experience themes woven throughout all lessons and activities. The curriculum is prepared for ongoing use and future dissemination across Pain Coach's global healthcare education network.

Discussion

Integrating lived experience meaningfully enhances the relevance, depth, and person-centeredness of persistent pain education. Its adoption by Pain Coach South Africa underscores the value and applicability of this lived-experience-informed approach.

This project is significant because it contributes a middle-ground, bottom-up educational model. It elevates patient perspectives while fitting within existing clinical training structures. The gold standard in lived experience work is full partnership in creation and dissemination, and this project represents an important step toward that ideal. Collaboration with lived experience experts shaped the module content, and the process established a foundation for deeper co-creation in future iterations.

Limitations include a short timeline, limited number of lived experience contributors, and the absence of formal co-facilitation or co-teaching. Opportunities for improvement include expanding lived experience involvement as equal partners, strengthening cultural responsiveness across diverse contexts, and evaluating the module's impact on provider behavior and patient outcomes over time.



Topics of the lived-experience informed persistent pain education module consisting of 6 topics for a 7 hour class.

References

