



Health Funds and the Evidence for Alexander Technique

The Australian Federal Government is introducing legislation effectively preventing private health funds from continuing to offer rebates for Alexander Technique lessons from April 1st 2019.

The reasoning is being stated as there is “no clear evidence demonstrating the efficacy of the excluded natural therapies”.¹

There is high quality evidence for the effectiveness of Alexander Technique.

The *British Medical Journal*² reported a clinical trial showing people with chronic lower back pain experienced significant relief from 6 Alexander Technique lessons. Reviewing after one year, those that had Alexander Technique lessons had pain for an average of 3 days per month while those who had normal care averaged 21 days of pain every month. The authors’ concluded that “one to one lessons in the Alexander technique from registered teachers have long term benefits for patients with chronic back pain.”

The *Annals of Internal Medicine*³ published a trial on chronic neck pain where patients taking Alexander Technique lessons had more than a 30% reduction in pain. Comparatively, physical therapy and exercise lead to only about a 9% reduction in pain. At a 12 month review, those who received Alexander Technique had sustained reductions in pain of around 30%. The *European Journal of Integrative Medicine*⁴ surveyed participants of this trial, and reported that the Alexander Technique participants improved in self-efficacy/self-care measures by 87% after 12 months, compared to 25% for usual care. The authors’ concluded that “Alexander Technique lessons led to long-term improvements in the way participants lived their daily lives and managed their neck pain”.

The *Clinical Rehabilitation Journal*⁵ published a study on Parkinson’s Disease which showed those receiving Alexander Technique demonstrated an increased ability in daily activities. This improvement was sustained 6 months later. The group that received Alexander lessons recorded a lower dosage increase in medication than the norm for this condition.

The British Alexander Technique Society lists over 50 papers with themes including pain, balance, postural tone, osteoarthritis, ergonomics and musical performance⁶. The evidence for Alexander Technique has satisfied the UK National Health Service who fund Alexander Technique as part of their outpatient pain clinics⁷ and also as part of the physical therapy management for adult patients with Parkinson’s Disease⁸.

The review criteria set by the review panel were exceptionally severe and prohibitive for a profession represented by a small population.

The findings of research into Alexander Technique have been supportive of its efficacy. However, the Australian professional society is financially unable to fund clinical trials in the quantity demanded by the review.

The legislative changes will make it much harder for Alexander Technique research to take place in Australia. It creates complications to research proposals at hospitals or clinics whose patients receive rebates.

It is still possible for changes to the review to be made.

You can lobby the Minister for Health, [Greg Hunt MP](#), the Shadow Minister for Health [Hon Catherine King MP](#), and also your [local representative](#).

Help raise awareness of Alexander Technique.

You can raise public awareness of Alexander Technique by talking to people in your networks about your experience. There are many Alexander Technique interest groups online where you can receive news feeds. Share stories about Alexander Technique on social media.

You can register your interest in making a donation towards Alexander Technique research with the professional society via info@austat.org.au.

For more information, talk to your teacher or contact the professional society, AUSTAT www.austat.org.au

References:

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5. *Randomized controlled trial of the Alexander technique for idiopathic Parkinson's disease.* **Clin Rehabil.** 2002 Nov;16(7):695-708. <https://doi.org/10.1191%2F0269215502cr544oa>
6. <https://alexandertechnique.co.uk/alexander-technique/research>
7. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/alexander-technique/>
8. *Parkinson's disease in adults.* **NICE guideline [NG71]** 2017. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng71/ifp/chapter/What-else-might-help>