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## Case Study: FastBack™ Prevention

### Reducing Unnecessary Spine Surgery Through Doctor/Patient Video Game

**Problem:** In the city of Muskegon, insurance provider Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan wanted to cure a serious problem. Spine surgery rates were triple the national average, and both doctors and patients were concerned.

**Solution:** Haig et al., Consulting worked with BCBS and the local physician organization to educate clinicians and the public through FastBack Prevention and its unconventional video game, "BackQuack."

**Approach:** BackQuack's counterintuitive story involves an animated doctor whose goal is to do the dumbest activities, say the most absurd things, and become the biggest quack doctor ever, as the office turns slowly into a dungeon.

- Real patients with real pain filled out a clinical questionnaire to ensure that their real doctor didn't miss any symptoms. Patients were then steered towards a virtual pamphlet rack with advice that related to their specific condition so they knew about options to surgery.
- Clinicians played too. Within the game, they learned what to do – and what NOT to do – to provide the best outcomes. Doctors also had access to a 400 page online back pain textbook, Haig and Colwell's Low Back Pain, from the American College of Physicians.

Through a BackQuack media blitz, pamphlets, posters, contests for clinical staff and promotions in hospitals, doctor offices, schools and community centers, Haig et al. helped educate the community.

**Outcome:** More than 2,000 people participated in the website game and countless more learned about it through the public information campaign, resulting in more engaged healthcare providers and a better-informed public.

**Lessons Learned:** Most prevention programs try to prevent pain itself—and almost all research shows that they do not work. Through real-world education and engagement programs, Haig et al's unique approach prevents medical misadventure and disability, the real causes of suffering and expense.