

CLEAR CENTER WEBINAR

“Novel Work Using Placebo Surgical Approach to Back Pain”

Speaker: Dr. Manuela Ferreira



**Monday
August 11, 2025
2-3pm PST**

[REGISTER
HERE](#)

Summary of talk: As with any other type of intervention, different research designs can be used to establish the effectiveness or efficacy of spinal surgery. These include trials comparing surgery to non-surgical care, no treatment or waiting list, other surgical procedures, and trials that include a sham or placebo arm. But the key question is: when do we need a placebo trial of surgery? The use of a placebo control may be the single most important design feature that trialists can add to a trial to minimize bias. These trials are still scarce in the field of spine surgery, and conducting placebo trials of surgery can be challenging. In this presentation, the need for placebo-controlled trials of surgery will be discussed, along with some lessons learned from designing and conducting the SUcceSS trial. Important aspects of designing and implementing such trials in the field of back pain will also be covered.

Speaker Bio: Professor Ferreira is an NHMRC Investigator Fellow, Professor of Musculoskeletal Health and Program Head, Musculoskeletal Health, at The George Institute for Global Health, where she conducts research on the mechanisms, prognosis, and management of musculoskeletal disorders, with a focus on low back pain.



Before joining The George Institute, she was Professor of Musculoskeletal Health at the University of Sydney, where she was inaugural chair of the Musculoskeletal Priority Research Area (80+ researchers) at the Kolling Institute, and co-chair of the Musculoskeletal Clinical Advisory Group of Sydney Health Partners (an NHMRC, Sydney University and health district research translation partnership). With More than 400 scientific publications, and over 30 million AUD in research funding, she is the 2nd highest ranked researcher in the world for ‘low back pain’ (of a total of 33,000 authors worldwide – Expertscape). She currently leads multiple randomised controlled trials of musculoskeletal interventions, including the first placebo randomised controlled trial of spinal surgery, an NHMRC-funded study that will establish the efficacy of decompressive surgery for lumbar spinal stenosis.