Whiplash – common problem, poorly understood


- Quebec Task Force whiplash definition: 
  *acceleration-deceleration mechanism of energy transfer to the neck that results in soft tissue injury* → acute localised neck pain.

- 30-50% proceed to develop *whiplash-associated disorders* (WAD)
  - chronic and more widespread symptoms
  - perceived pain influenced by psychosocial constructs (beliefs, previous experience, ongoing litigation)
  - *central sensitisation*
  - discrete tender *trigger points* with palpable difference in muscle tone

- Central sensitisation:
  - Enhanced excitability of nociceptor neurones
  - Altered sensory processing in brain
  - Loss of descending inhibition of pain pathways

- 3 assessment factors:
  - pain disproportionate to injury
  - widespread distribution beyond injury
  - Central Sensitisation Inventory questionnaire score > 40

- Multidimensional features secondary to neuromodulation of inter-related physiological pathways:
  - Widespread hyperalgesia and allodynia
  - Altered sensation
  - Dyskinaesthesia
  - Sleep changes
  - Mood changes
  - Emotional distress
  - Concentration problems
  - Lethargy; malaise

- Treatment strategies are multimodal within a biopsychosocial framework:
  - Education
  - Exercise (active)
  - Physiotherapy (active & passive)
  - Better outcome with fewer visits to reduce dependence and passivity