Priority Topic: **LOW BACK PAIN**

### Key Features:

**For a single source on this topic, pick one of these:**

- Chronic Low Back Pain AAFP 2015
- Low Back Pain AIM 2014

1. In a patient with **undefined acute low-back pain** (LBP):

   a) Rule out **serious causes** (e.g., cauda equina syndrome, pyelonephritis, ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm, cancer) through appropriate **history and physical examination**.

   b) Make a **positive diagnosis of musculoskeletal pain** (not a diagnosis of exclusion) through an appropriate history and physical examination.

**What you should study:**

- ✔ Low Back Pain AIM 2014
- ✔ EM Cases Episode 26: Low Back Pain Emergencies
- ✔ Chronic Low Back Pain Diagnosis and Management NATURE 2013
  - **pay special attention to RED and YELLOW flags**
- ✔ Diagnosis and Treatment of Acute LBP AAFP 2012
2. In a patient with confirmed **mechanical low back pain**:

   a) **Do not over-investigate** in the acute phase.

   **What you should study:**
   ✓ Low Back Pain AIM 2014
   ✓ Imaging Low Back Pain AAFP Choosing Wisely

   b) Advise the patient:
   • that **symptoms can evolve**, and ensure **adequate follow-up care**.
   • that the **prognosis is positive** (i.e., the overwhelming majority of cases will get better).

   **What you should study:**
   ✓ Mechanical Low Back Pain NATURE 2013

3. In a patient with mechanical low back pain, whether it is acute or chronic, give **appropriate analgesia** and titrate it to the patient’s pain.

   **What you should study:**
   ✓ Management of LBP AAFP 2017
   ✓ Flexeril for LBP AAFP 2016
   ✓ LBP Management Guideline Review 2017
   ✓ Treatments for Sciatica AAFP 2017
   ✓ Opioid vs Nonopioid Meds for LBP JAMA 2018
   ✓ Back pain and sciatica BMJ Infographic

4. **Advise the patient** with mechanical low back pain to return if **new or progressive neurologic symptoms** develop.

   ✓ **Just do it!**
5. In all patients with mechanical low back pain, discuss exercises and posture strategies to prevent recurrences.

**What you should study:**

- Low Back Pain AIM 2014
- Pilates for LBP AAFP 2017 Cochrane Summary
- Effects of Exercise and Physical Activity on LBP 2016