1. Sometimes I have a lot of back pain. What can be done for this?

A common feature of polycystic kidney disease is back pain. This is because the weight of the cysts can drag on the spine. Some other causes of back pain include kidney stones or cyst infection. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a test that allows us to see the cysts in the kidneys. It is used to prove that this is the reason for the back pain.

It is important to understand that this pain may be life-long and patients have a role in trying to manage it too. We recommend:

- In the first instance, try ways that avoid medications. These include backrubs, using non-steroidal creams, gels or ointments, physiotherapy, the Alexander technique, acupuncture etc. Weight loss (if you are overweight) and regular walking may also help.
- If these treatments are not useful you may need to use medication such as Paracetamol. Please be aware that you SHOULD NOT take more than 6 tablets of Panadol a day. That is 6x500 milligram tablets in total.
- There is the risk in the longer term of using stronger medicine that may be addictive. This includes medication such as Codeine, which should not be taken every day. You will need to discuss the use of stronger medication with your specialist since these require a prescription.
- If the pain is especially bad and medication does not help, then you may need to have the cysts in your kidneys removed. You should have a discussion with your specialist, surgeon and family about having surgery as there are some risks involved.