Appendix 1

Semi-structured Interview Guide

Preamble 1: Thanks for agreeing to participate in our study. As I mentioned earlier, we are interested in understanding individuals’ perspectives on how uncertainty is managed during clinical encounters and how it could be improved. There are no right or wrong answers or things to say. We are keen to hear your thoughts and opinions, either positive, negative or neutral. Please stop me at any time if you need to take a break or if you want to end the interview for any reason. Also, please remember that you don’t have to answer every question – just let me know if you want to move on from something. Before I start, do I have your permission to audio-record this session?

1. (Opening question) Can you describe to me what your low back pain experience has been like?
   
   Possible prompts
   - How frequently do you have it? (e.g., do your low back pain symptoms fluctuate over time?)
   - How would you describe your low back pain symptoms?
   
   Follow-up question
   - Who have you seen for your low back pain?

2. I now would like to ask you to reflect about your previous experiences with healthcare professionals (e.g. the healthcare professionals you mentioned), when you sought care because of your low back pain. Can you elaborate on a few examples of scenarios in which either you or the clinician experienced uncertainty?
   
   Please feel free to take a few minutes to write a few examples down, just so we can discuss one at the time.
   
   Possible prompt
   - Can you tell me about other factors that have made either you or the clinician experience uncertainty during the consultation? For example, uncertainty about cause(s) of symptoms, treatment efficacy or risks, how long symptoms would last for, etc?
   
   Follow-up question
   - What was it like for you to navigate uncertainty about “X”, within the context of your low back pain experience?

3. Can you describe how the clinician managed uncertainty in the context of “X” (use this same question to go through each scenario mentioned in response to question 2)?
   
   Possible prompt
   - Can you go into a little more detail about what they said or did within this context of uncertainty about “X”?
   
   Follow-up questions
   - Can you describe how what they said and what they did made you feel?
Can you tell me know that impacted on your decisions regarding how to manage your low back pain?

4. In scenario X, is there anything you would have liked the clinician to have done differently? (use this same question to go through each scenario mentioned in response to question 2)?

Follow-up questions:

How would the strategy of ___________ have helped you to navigate uncertainty?
How would the strategy of ___________ have helped you to manage your low back pain?

5. Is there anything you would like to add that we haven’t covered today?