



Respiratory physiotherapy for patients with LRTI: The patients' perspective

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Abstract

Lower respiratory tract infections (LRTI) are a major cause of health and economic burden worldwide.

Respiratory physiotherapy (RP) has shown to improve lung function and functional recovery on these patients; however, their perspectives about the outcomes achieved in RP interventions have never been explored. This study assessed the perspectives of patients with LRTI about their participation in a RP intervention.

27 patients with LRTI (58.6 ± 17.2 yrs; 10 male) were recruited from the emergency department of a hospital and enrolled in a 3 week RP intervention. RP included breathing retraining, airway clearance techniques, aerobic training and education about LRTI. After the intervention, semi-structured interviews were conducted and audio recorded. Interviews were analysed (thematic analysis) by 2 independent judges.

All participants reported that the intervention had high impact in their respiratory condition and symptoms, specifically by improving their perceived breathlessness ($n=9$), fatigue ($n=4$), sputum expectoration ($n=4$) and wheezing ($n=2$). Patients also reported to have acquired self-management skills to prevent and control future LRTI, such as risk behaviour modification (i.e., smoking; sedentary lifestyles; polluted environments and nutrition; $n=10$), breathing and airway clearance techniques to control respiratory symptoms ($n=12$).

RP improves patients' symptoms and well-being during LRTI, but also seems to enhance their skills in the management of future infections. Thus, RP interventions may be a key component to enhance patients' treatment, prevent recurrent LRTI and ultimately reduce healthcare costs. Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of RP in patients with LRTI.