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Pulmonary Rehabilitation Programs In COPD: The Patients' Perspective

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Pulmonary Rehabilitation Programs In COPD: The Patients' Perspective

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Rationale: The international guidelines recommend Pulmonary Rehabilitation (PR) as a standard of care in the management of patient with COPD since it is an evidence-based effective intervention. However, these guidelines have been designed mostly according to health professionals' perspectives. The World Health Organization recommends a health care system based on a patient-centered model and therefore, it is essential to consider patients' perspectives. This study aimed to explore patients' needs, expectations and concerns about PR programs.

Methods: A cross-sectional qualitative study was carried out with 23 patients with COPD in the central region of Portugal. The study received full approval from the Ethics Committees. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews to explore patients' perception. All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and analyzed through content analysis by 2 independent judges.

Results: Participants (male 73.9%) had a mean age of 73.0±7.9 years old and a mean FEV₁ of 36.6±8.4% predicted. Participants reported the need to learn strategies to deal with dyspnea (n=19) and fatigue (n=12) symptoms, especially during activities such as walking (n=12) climbing stairs (n=6) and activities involving the upper limbs (n=7). Due to these impairments, patients expressed the need to increase their exercise tolerance as they felt restricted in leaving the house (n=5) and engaging recreational activities, such as agriculture and walking (n=5). Participants also expected that a PR program would improve their family routines as they, due to their disease were not able to follow their family members in recreational activities (n=3). Almost all participants (n=20) were interested in participating in a PR program and most of them had no concerns about their participation. The ones that reported concerns were related to transportation difficulties, such as dependence from family members and fear of burdening them (n=4), walking difficulties (n=2) and financial restrictions (n=1).

Conclusions: The findings suggest that patients with COPD have specific expectations and concerns about their participation in a PR program. Adequate knowledge about these aspects will allow health professionals to adjust PR programs to patients' needs and, potentially enhance adherence to these interventions.

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