



The asthma control test as a tool to monitor and tailor counselling of asthma patients in community pharmacies

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Background

It is fact that asthma in most patients is not well controlled. Inadequate inhalation technique, non-adherence to medications as well as insufficient self-managemant skills may be possible reasons. Guidelines recommend regular assessment of asthma control as an important factor in asthma management. The asthma control test (ACT) is a quick, patient-based tool to assess asthma control.

Objectives

- To assess suitability of the ACT in community pharmacists' (CP) consultation.
- To document the acceptance of the test and patients' personal handling of test results.
- To evaluate patients' information needs.

Methods

Between March and June 2009, 76 asthma patients were asked by CP to complete the ACT. Patients were then interviewed by means of a standardized questionnaire on ACT acceptance, individual handling of test results and their needs of information concerning correct inhalation technique, drug and adverse drug effects, use of an asthma diary and self-management of an asthma attack. At study end, CP were interviewed on their experiences with the ACT in patient counselling. Data were transcribed electronically, and analyzed (STATA).

Main Results

The basic study results are summarised in Table 1. In total, 74 patients were recruited in 5 community pharmacies. 21.1% of the asthma patients were not controlled at all, 32.4% partly controlled, 39.4% well controlled and 7.0% were completely controlled (Figure 1). The ACT was well accepted because 76.4% of all involved patients appreciated the offer to assess their asthma control by the ACT (Figure 2). 39.2% were highly interested in information concerning asthma, 43.2% had moderate interest and 17.6% had no interest at all. Patients were mostly interested in information regarding adverse drug effects (56.2%) and effects of medicine (54.1%) (Table 2).

Table 1: Basic study results

Number of participating CP	5
Number of participating asthma patients	74
Age	
18 – 30 years	2 (2.7%)
31 – 50 years	16 (21.6%)
51 – 70 years	38 (51.4%)
> 70 years	18 (24.3%)
Gender (female vs. male)	71.6% vs. 28.4%
Duration of disease	
< 2 years	3 (4.3%)
2 – 5 years	9 (12.9%)
6 – 10 years	8 (11.4%)
11 – 15 years	13 (18.6%)
> 15 years	37 (52.9%)
Participation in a disease management program (DMP)	Yes: 17 (23%)
Usage of a peak flow meter	Yes: 19 (25.7%)
Usage of an asthma diary	Yes: 10 (13.7%)

Table 2: Needs of information

Interest in counselling themes	
Self-management of an asthma attack	Yes: 23 (31.5%)
Drug effects	Yes: 40 (54.1%)
Adverse drug effects	Yes: 41 (56.2%)
Inhalation technique	Yes: 17 (23.3%)
Usage of an asthma diary	Yes: 17 (23.3%)

Figure 1: Categorization of ACT results

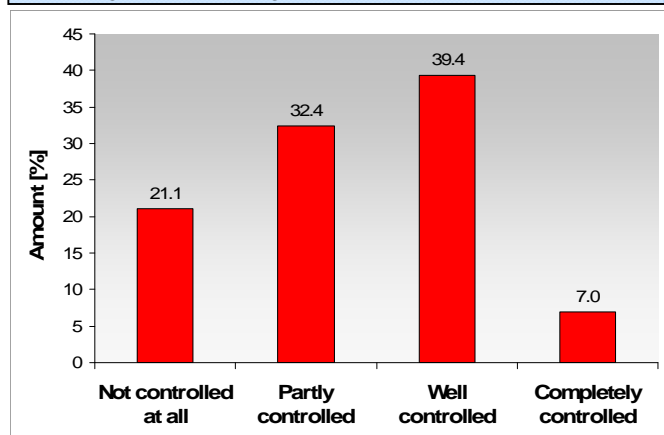
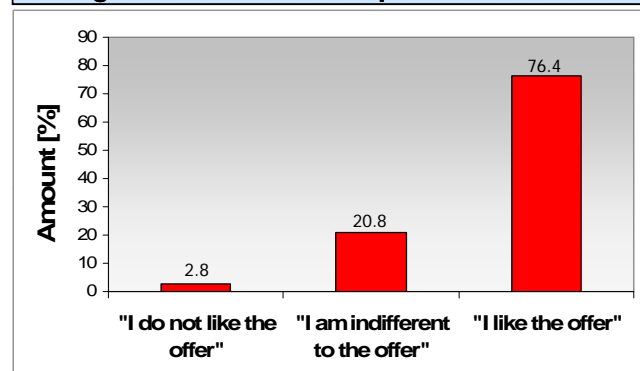


Figure 2: Patient's acceptance of the ACT



Conclusions

The ACT is a suitable tool to expand pharmaceutical services for asthma patients. The ACT is highly accepted, and may help to identify and sensibilize patients with suboptimal asthma control in community pharmacies. Patients' needs of information is high. With the ACT CP can improve continuous monitoring, and tailor patient counselling.