Use of an online survey to detect reasons for low physical activity in COPD patients
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doi:10.4017/gt.2010.09.02.241.00 Purpose Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a
 disabling, airway disease with variable extrapulmonary effects that may contribute to disease
 severity in individual patients¹. Patients with COPD demonstrate reduced levels of spontane-
 ous daily physical activity compared with healthy controls². This results in a higher risk for
 hospital admission and shorter survival³. It is not yet clear what the reasons for this lack of
 activities are. Method We developed an online survey for COPD patients to investigate
 which reasons patients themselves list for being less active. In addition, this survey provides
 information on whether the internet proves to be a usable platform to administer surveys in
 COPD patients. We used the website www.surveymonkey.com to design the survey and store
 and analyze the data. The link to the survey was posted on the patient forum of the Dutch
 Asthma Foundation and on relevant COPD group sites of hyves, a Dutch friend based internet
 site such as facebook. The questionnaire was online from October 23rd 2009 until January
 12th 2010. Results & Discussion. In total 71 COPD patients started the survey and 37
 answered all the questions. The questionnaire was mostly filled-in by women (about 84%) and
 average age was around 60. GOLD stage was distributed quite equally over the participants.
 So, it seems an online survey is mainly usable in female COPD patients. A slightly larger
 group said that they perform less physical activity since diagnosed with COPD. About 40%
 admitted to never or not always following the exercise prescriptions they were given by health
 care professionals. Factors mentioned that stimulate an increase in physical activity are: good
 weather conditions, walking the dog, seeking to relax or improve physical condition, noticing
 improvement and social contact. Factors that cause a decrease in physical activity are: short-
 ness of breath, anxiety, bad weather conditions/high humidity, tiredness and feeling de-
 pressed. An earlier study showed that indoor air quality is also an influencing factor on physi-
 cal activities⁴. Knowing which factors discourage, or stimulate, patients to be physically active
could be used as predictors for physical activity. The results of this study will be used as input
for the development of an intervention to monitor and maintain the daily physical activity of
COPD patients.
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