

Comprehensive medication reviews in Swedish hospitals: what does the patient have to say?

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Background

Medication Reviews Bridging Healthcare (MedBridge) is a randomised controlled trial (RCT) studying the impact of comprehensive medication reviews, including follow-up telephone calls after hospital discharge, by ward-based pharmacists on older patients' health-related outcomes [1]. Trials with complex interventions are often criticised because of a lack of understanding of the context, implementation and mechanism of action [2]. Therefore, process evaluations of such trials are highly recommended to provide detailed understanding of patients' experiences [2].

Objective

To explore older patients' experiences with and views on comprehensive medication reviews and follow-up telephone calls by clinical pharmacists within an RCT.

Results

In general, the patients' experiences and views were positive. Seven key themes were identified:

Feeling of being taken care of and heterogenous health effects

- Patients have a feeling of being taken care of
- Understanding of the need of medication reviews
- It is good to perform a medication review, but the health effects are unknown
- Heterogeneous effects on medication treatment
- Positive or no effect on treatment adherence

Methods

We conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with fifteen patients (66-94 years; 7 male, 8 female) from four hospitals in Sweden, all of whom participated in the MedBridge trial. Discussion topics included communication, information, decision-making, and effects on the patient. Interviews took place after discharge, were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and thematically analysed using a framework approach.

Despite the unclear role of the pharmacist, their involvement is appreciated

- Unclear role of the pharmacist
- Limited understanding of the medication review process
- Positive view on pharmacist involvement in healthcare
- The pharmacist is available
- It is the physician's responsibility

Importance of being informed, but receiving and retaining information is problematic

- It is important to be informed about medication
- Good quality of information from the pharmacist in general
- Recalling information is problematic
- Patients receive a lot of other information at the hospital
- Other information sources can be very helpful

Positive views on the pharmacist's knowledge and competences

Patients rely on healthcare professionals for decision-making

- Limited role of patients in decision-making
- Patients depend on healthcare professionals
- Patients rather not take medication
- Patients decide themselves

Time, location and other factors influencing the effectiveness of medication reviews

- Timing of the pharmacist contact can be essential
- The hospital ward is a suitable location
- There is little time during discharge
- It is difficult to inform old and ill patients

Generic substitution is a problem

Conclusion

Although older patients generally have positive experiences with and views on comprehensive medication reviews and follow-up telephone calls, some factors may negatively impact the effects of these interventions. Future initiatives on comprehensive

medication reviews by clinical pharmacists should address these negative factors and utilize the positive views.

References

[1] Kempen TGH, et al. Medication Reviews Bridging Healthcare (MedBridge): Study protocol for a pragmatic cluster-randomised crossover trial. Contemp Clin Trials. 2017;Jul 21;61:126-132.

[2] Moore GF, et al. Process evaluation of complex interventions: Medical Research Council guidance. BMJ. 2015 Mar 19;350:h1258.

