The impact of health literacy on the perception of patient empowerment tools among healthcare service-users and staff

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Introduction

Person-centred care is where healthcare is personalised to the individual needs of a person. It has been shown to improve health outcomes and experience. Healthcare professionals need to understand a person's level of knowledge, confidence and skill in managing their health condition in order to help them adapt the care they provide to meet individual need. Tools, called patient empowerment tools can be used to aid this process. The tools often come in the form of a short questionnaire. This study considers factors that influence perception of patient empowerment tools in the context of health literacy.

Methods

Recruited from physiotherapy and podiatry outpatient departments from one health board in Wales.

Interviews

Service users (aged over 18 years) (n=13)

Focus groups

Physiotherapists and podiatrists (n=10)

The interviews and focus groups were run and recorded on Microsoft Teams, and transcribed. Qualitative data was thematically described and summarised using the aspects of the "interdependent determinants of implementation success".

Results: patient's perceptions

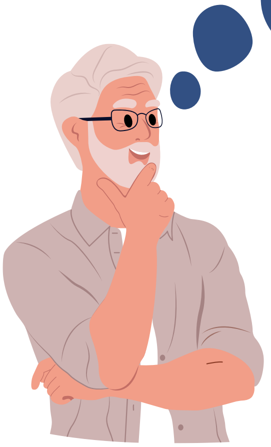
Characteristics of the tools:

Clarity of questions, wording and answer option:

- Preference towards shorter tools, with direct questions.
- Most participants preferred tick box answers options, as they were easy to respond to and looked clearer on the page.
- Complex wording was reported to be difficult to translate into native languages.

Content:

- Participants reported that the tools were not specific to their illness or care being received.
- There was a preference towards specific, relevant and relatable questions.



> “If I translate that to my language, it actually doesn't translate very well, so it could actually confuse me.”

> “It's straightforward, it's simple, and it's one that you would remember”

> “More comforted in the fact that, yeah, you're getting more background information and more understanding of the of the patient's needs.”

Patient level influences: Perception of relevance and impact on care:

- Provision of information collection by the tools was seen as valuable and could help build patient-healthcare profession relationships.
- Perception that care could be reduced or delayed if they had a high activation score.

Health literacy did not appear to influence the perception and opinion of the tools by patients

PET Study

Results: Healthcare professional's perception

Characteristics of the tools:

Accessibility and engagement:

- Preference towards tools and sentences being short and concise.
- Concerns over the tools being too generic.

Clinical appropriateness:

- Preference towards wording that focuses on a person-centred model of healthcare.
- Overall scored seen as beneficial, with acknowledgment that individual questions were needed.

Collective level influences:

Facilitators:

- Electronic data collection
- Automatic calculation of overall score
- Having a culture of use and training

> "Sometimes it's difficult getting the patients to engage, especially if there's a long list of questions on the form"

> "I sometimes think that the wording of things can set up a less helpful Conversation. If it's not pulling us towards that collaboration and power balance between therapist and the patient"

Barriers:

- Lots of information to digest
- Limited time in consultations
- Lack of local pathways

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Interpretation

Service users reported on how easy the tools were to read and understand, the length of the tools and the context in which it was given (i.e., physiotherapy or podiatry), and how relevant this was to their care.

Staff members reported on the accessibility and clinical relevance of the tools and facilitators (provision of useful information, time efficiency, resource allocation) and barriers (care pathways, staff training and engagement) of using patient empowerment tools in routine practice.

Recommendations

Implementation:

- Explore electronic data collection and data storage
- Having a plan for evaluating the impact and success of implementation
- Developing a national consensus for routine digital data collection
- Development clinical pathways, training and culture of routing in routine care

Features of the tools:

- Explore the ability to translate into Welsh
- Explore the ability to use as a screening tool and implications of this approach
- Provide information on why and how to complete the tool
- Gain permission to change wording to talk about healthcare professional rather than Doctor.

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