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Experiences of a primary care intervention promoting use of an online health community (OHC) for adults with troublesome asthma: Qualitative interview study

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In the UK, approximately 5.4 million adults have asthma, resulting in decreased quality of life and increased healthcare use. Interventions promoting self-management can improve asthma control. We developed an intervention in which adults with asthma attended a face-to-face consultation with a primary care clinician at their general practice (GP), who demonstrated an established asthma OHC and signed patients up. Patients then engaged with the OHC. This study explored stakeholders' experiences of the intervention.

Forty-two study participants and five nurses who delivered the intervention were invited to qualitative, one-to-one, semi-structured interviews. A topic guide was used. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke method) is ongoing.

We interviewed twelve patients (nine female, two male, one unknown; eight White, three non-White) registered across six GPs, and five female nurses (three practice nurses, two research nurses; two White, three non-White). Preliminary findings indicate patient satisfaction with the questionnaires completed during consultation. Patients noted that while nurses thoroughly explained peer support, more emphasis is needed on ensuring patients understand how to use the OHC. Most patients reported engaging passively and that OHC engagement gave them information about their condition and confidence in managing asthma.

Promotion of online peer support and sign-up by primary care clinicians was acceptable and resulted in OHC engagement. Findings will refine the intervention and inform delivery of a trial to assess effectiveness.