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Online Asthma/COPD self-management diaries: A qualitative study into patient and professional experiences with persistent users and quitters

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Background: Online self-management diaries are used to develop patients self-management skills and facilitate associated behavioral changes. Although web-based diaries are widely used, little is known about experiences and reasons for (discontinuation) of use of these programs. Methods: Semi-structured interviews (n=30) were conducted with patients and professionals to describe reasons for use or discontinuation of use of self-management diaries (myasthmaonline and mycopdonline, www.curavista.nl) for asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in two teaching hospitals in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Results: Patients used diaries to: improve their insight, cope more consciously, feel in control, and discuss diary outcomes with their health care professionals. Only 2 patients indicated using the diary to cope more effectively by early recognition and self-treatment of an exacerbation. Both professionals and patients experienced practical barriers in integrating the use of self-management diaries in daily practice. Conclusion: Suggestions to improve online self-management diaries are: include a web video consult, enable data communication with Hospital Information Systems and apps, improve the user friendliness, provide open space to write down patients comments, include environmental factors and start the self-management diary together with the professional. Health care professionals could play a (larger) role in helping patients get started by collaboratively developing an individual treatment plan and for exacerbation management. If these suggestions are adopted, usage and efficacy of self-management diaries may be improved.