

Three years of experience with a COPD helpline in Norway

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Introduction

There is a need for extensive information, advice and guidance to patients, families, professionals and public regarding COPD. The Heart and Lung Association in Norway (LHL) and Glittrelinikken are running a charge-free COPD-helpline to help patients and their next of kin to cope with everyday life, and, in general, spread knowledge about the illness of COPD. The COPD-helpline opened in November 2006 and has partly been funded by the Norwegian Public Health System since 2009.

Aims

To evaluate and describe three years of experience with the COPD-helpline.

Methods

All calls were registered on an anonymous, standardized form according to age, gender, phone-call duration, context for calling and questions asked.

The Norwegian Work Research Institute (WRI) (1) performed a survey among 72 users, asking about helpline satisfaction, issues for calling and possible improvements. A semi-structured questionnaire answered on the phone was used.



Results

- There were 2709 calls from 2007 to 2009
- Gender; 62 % women, 38 % men
- Age; 85 % were 50 years or older
- Duration of calls; from 2 to 100 minutes
- 2/3 were patients with COPD, 1/3 family members, health professionals and others
- 1/3 had called more than once
- Questions asked were generally health-related

Frequently asked questions:

- Tell me about COPD – what is COPD?
- How can I improve my COPD self-management?
- I am worried about my future, what can I expect?
- I need to stop smoking, can you help me?
- How can I solve my problem with mucus?
- My husband/wife/mother/father doesn't like to talk about his/her illness, do you have any advice to me?

In the WRI survey, COPD patients expressed lack of knowledge of their own disease and treatment. Many expressed feelings of guilt and lack of self-esteem. They experienced lack of time and information in primary care.

More than 70 % reported to be very satisfied with the Helpline call. The same number reported the call very useful, below 10 % reported it not useful. The nurses were characterized as caring and professional, having plenty of time to share their knowledge.

From the WRI survey

- “The Helpline provided me with information I could easily apply to my everyday life” (*patient*)
- “After talking with the helpline, my motivation to stop smoking increased” (*patient*)
- “I received care and encouragement” (*patient*)
- “My familii don't understand my situation, it is nice to have somebody to talk to” (*patient*)
- “I am more confident in helping my mother with her breathing problems now” (*daughter of a COPD-patient*)
- “Information from the Help-line helped me finishing my student-paper” (*student*)

Conclusion

- The COPD-helpline indicates to serve a purpose.
- It seems necessary to focus on promotion and marketing in order to reach out to a larger audience of patients, families, health professionals and others.
- The survey conducted by WRI in 2007 concluded that users were very satisfied with the information and support they received from the COPD helpline.
- Nurses have a broad qualification and may contribute with important information, advice and guidance on the phone.

References

1. Steen JE, Steen AH (2007) Evaluering Kolslinjen. Norwegian Work Research Institute.

