Reviewer’s report

Title: Knowledge gaps in patients with COPD and their proxies

Version: 1 Date: 08 Mar 2017

Reviewer: David Seamark

Reviewer's report:

The paper describes an interesting questionnaire survey of both patients with COPD and their proxies. The methodology looks appropriate.

My main concerns are with the conclusions that the patients and their proxies have insufficient knowledge of COPD and management. A correct answer score of around 66% in most exams would be considered quite commendable and indeed for such a group as this, very encouraging. The majority on 'non-correct' answers were in fact 'do not know' which is not the same as a 'wrong answer'. The study does demonstrate an interesting association with high correct scores and pulmonary rehabilitation which does lend support to the educational content of such interventions.

Only in the discussion of limitations of the study do the authors consider the issue that this a non-validated questionnaire. I feel this is a real problem as I found some of the questions (at least in English translation) ambiguous eg. Q19 and Q17 where it depends on what a patient/proxy understands by lung function or too technical Q18 for a lay person. It would be interesting to know how health care professionals might answer the questionnaire.

Consequently I feel the authors need to be much more restrained in their conclusions and recommendations. Use of a non-validated questionnaire must be acknowledged more fully and I suggest that some questions may need to be excluded. If anything the results are encouraging especially with the associated improvement with pulmonary rehab. However, the lack of validation restricts the strength of the conclusions and needing addressing.

One point for clarification is the timing of the home visits-presumably at least 4 weeks after initial contact during a hospital admission (as this was part of eligibility)

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
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Yes
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No

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