Author’s response to reviews

Title: Empowerment of patients in online discussions about medicine use

Authors:

Jasper J. van Berkel (Jasper.van.berkel@rivm.nl)
Mattijs Lambooij (Mattijs.lambooij@rivm.nl)
Ingrid Hegger (Ingrid.hegger@rivm.nl)

Version: 4 Date: 9 October 2014

Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Please find enclosed the manuscript entitled ‘Empowerment of patients in online discussions about medicine use’, which we would like to submit for publication as a research article in BMC Medical Informatics & Decision Making.

We think this article will be interesting for your readers. In this qualitative study we explored to what extent aspects of patient empowerment, through patient-to-patient interaction about medicine, are found in discussions on online message boards for people with diabetes, ALS and ADHD. Patient empowerment is crucial in successful self-management of people with chronic diseases, as empowered patients are found to better manage their care process. Because patients with chronic conditions are more and more counted upon to be self-sufficient in the management of their disorder, our aim was to see to what extent discussions on medicine use taking place on online message boards, contribute to patient empowerment and could subsequently enhance more effective use of medicines.

In line with previous studies, we looked for empowerment processes and potential disadvantages related to the use of message boards. Our manuscript shows that patient empowerment processes occur in posts on message boards related to all three disorders. The type of information shared in these processes could contribute to the self-efficiency of the patient when it comes to medicine use. We did not see any major disadvantages occur. A remarkable finding was that in many discussions there was a tendency to refer people to a health care professional. This shows that despite the development towards more self-management, patients still reserve an important role for health care professionals in the care process.

We hope that you will find this manuscript to be suitable for publication in BMC Medical Informatics & Decision Making.

All authors participated in the concept and design of the underlying study and read and approved the final manuscript. All authors declare that they have no
competing interests. The manuscript is original, has not already been published in a journal and is not currently under consideration by another journal.

We look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,

Jasper van Berkel
Centre for Health Protection