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Diagnosis of COPD in the face of multimorbidity, patients' perspectives

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Abstract

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Diagnosis of COPD in the face of multimorbidity, patients' perspectives

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Background A major cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide, COPD often occurs in the presence of multiple other related or unrelated health conditions, which may have implications for experience and management of the disease; a phenomenon known as multimorbidity. Little research has been done exploring patients' perspectives of COPD and even less is known about impact of comorbidities on the disease.

Aim of Study This qualitative study was conducted to understand the physical, psychological and social impact of a new diagnosis of COPD in the context of multimorbidity.

Methods Participants were diagnosed with COPD during a Sydney-based randomised control trial of case finding and early intervention in COPD. From 254 participants in the trial, 20 participants were identified for the qualitative study using maximum variation sampling based on age, gender, socioeconomic status, geographic location and severity of COPD. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews and recorded for transcription purposes.

Results In spite of accepting the diagnosis, most participants had difficulty recognising the significance and incorporating COPD into their lives. Selfmanagement capacity and ability to use healthcare services were challenged by limited understanding of COPD and its implications, complications presented by comorbidities and financial barriers (eg. cost of consulting a specialist). In many cases, the salience of another chronic condition (eg. diabetes) outweighed that of COPD.

Conclusion The findings provide an insight into how patients prioritise health conditions, highlighting the importance of understanding and incorporating their perspectives through patient-centered practice, tailored education and development of personalised care plans for COPD patients with multimorbidity.