

Young adults' support needs for managing asthma: A pilot qualitative study

Caroline Popielaski, Amber King, PharmD, Ruth Jeminiwa, PhD
Jefferson College of Pharmacy
Thomas Jefferson University

Background

- Asthma is a public health problem which can pose a significant burden on individuals of all ages.
- Uncontrolled disease can lead to missed school or work, emergency department visits, and premature death¹
- It would be beneficial to explore how best to assist patients with asthma in managing their disease state to avoid worsening illness
- The young adult population (18-25 years) have unique challenges
 - Great instability in their lives
 - Many have moved away from home but are not yet fully independent²
 - May exhibit poor adherence to their medication regimens due to this increase in independence leading to more frequent asthma exacerbations³
 - More self-focused age group
 - Provides opportunity to explore medication adherence regimen needs²
 - Likely to be receptive to asthma treatment plans that will benefit them

Objective

- We aim to explore the medication-related needs of young adults with asthma

Methods

Participant recruitment

- Inclusion criteria:
 - ✓ Asthma diagnosis
 - ✓ Between 18-29 years of age
 - ✓ Prescription for a daily inhaled corticosteroid
- Patients recruited from October 2021 - November 2021
- Study advertised using flyers located around Jefferson's campus

Data Collection:

- Semi-structured interview via Zoom, a teleconferencing app
- Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim with Otter.ai
- Transcribed data were cross-checked by researchers

Data analysis:

- Line by line coding performed by two independent researchers using NVivo software
- Data were coded inductively and intercoders agreement assessed
- Thematic analysis performed as described by Braun and Clarke⁴
- The study was approved by the local IRB

Results

- **Four themes emerged:**
 1. Support from clinicians
 2. Social support
 3. Self-management support
 4. Educational support
- There was substantial agreement (intercoder's reliability = 61%)⁵ among researchers

Emerging Themes

Themes	Quotes
Support from clinicians <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary care physicians and allergists are most useful for providing support to young adults.• Collaboration between doctors and pharmacists is also helpful for getting medication refills on time.• Support from clinicians include prescribing medications, assessing adherence to medications, monitoring asthma symptoms, treating flareups, education on device use	"A lot of [support from my doctor] has been with managing my flare-ups." "I'm thankful [my allergist is] really quick about making sure they can get me refills and get me medication if I need it." "One thing that would be great is if my doctor and my pharmacy had some sort of program where they would immediately send me one without me having to ask or request a new prescription"
Social support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medication-taking assistance came mainly from parents when patients were younger.• Now, medication use responsibility falls almost entirely on them.• Young adults also receive support from friends• Social support included ensuring the availability of medications, monitoring adherence, and accompanying young adults to the doctor's office.	"My parents pick up my medication for me sometimes." "They used to when I was very young, but now everything's on me." "my mom would help me take my inhaler.. And make sure I took my maintenance inhaler every day. " "[I received] little bit of support from my friends, but mostly my mom."
Self-management support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young adults may not always admit a need for help or assistance despite needing one.• The biggest obstacle for young adults in managing their asthma is developing a schedule that is feasible and fits into their busy lifestyles.• Many participants admitted a need for:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a system to track inhaler use that is linked to clinicians to facilitate quicker refills,• reminders to take medications daily,• ensuring availability of medications especially during trips	"[I am] working full time. So it gets hectic. And I think with all of that going on, just having a reminder that hey, I need to take this would help me stay consistent with it." "I think number one is probably just time and having it in my schedule and remembering to take it." "being able to track like how much of the medication you have left" "it'd be great if it would then communicate to your pharmacist, when you're going to be out of the dose, when you're going to be out of that inhaler and need a new one."
Educational support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants were interested in learning more about asthma, device use, the different medications and their mechanisms of action.	"I don't really know anything about how it makes my breathing better." "...a reminder on how you should be taking your inhalers because I feel like I wasn't really given [that]"

Next Steps

- Recruit at least 11 more participants to conduct additional interviews
- Generate suggestions for digital health software that can assist with asthma management

Future Studies

- Future research to:
 - examine asthma management perceptions in older populations as well as younger populations
 - Compare the support needs between different age groups

Conclusion

1. Young adults are receptive to guidance from doctors, allergists, and pharmacists to better understand and manage their asthma diagnosis.
2. Young adults would benefit from increased support in remembering to get refills for their medications and remembering to use their inhalers daily.
3. Future studies may leverage on family and friends to support young adults' medication use

References

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