A qualitative study on the development of pulmonary rehabilitation for patients with chronic lung disease in Kampala, Uganda

Pooler, J. Muyinda, H. Nyakoojo, G. Kirenga, B. Jones, R.
jillian.pooler@plymouth.ac.uk

Introduction:
Chronic lung disease is widely prevalent in Africa (1) and is a major threat to health, with few available treatments.
Patients with CLD develop skeletal muscle dysfunction related to physical inactivity and systemic inflammation compounded by impaired nutrition (2).
Symptoms such as breathlessness and fatigue which come with deconditioning, demotivation, and psychosocial isolation have been addressed by pulmonary rehabilitation (PR) (3, 4).

Aim:
To investigate the acceptability of traditional Western PR in Kampala, for patients with Chronic Lung Disease, including post-TBLD.

Methods: Adapted PR exercise regime and education programme twice-weekly for 6 weeks.
- Interviews before and after PR
- Focus group discussions
- Focus groups
- Ethnographic observations

Data were analysed thematically.

Results:
- 4 PR groups
- 44 patients recruited
- 42 completed
- 25 baseline and 19 six-week-post completion interviews
- 5 focus group discussions
- Ethnographic observations

- Patients reported being debilitated by their condition before PR.
  - Although exercises were hard to complete at first, PR was acceptable and was often continued at home.
  - Improvements in functional ability, social and intimate relationships and less stigma were reported. In many individuals, PR was life-transforming.

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Conclusions:
- PR offers a new option for treatment for a neglected group of patients, who saw major improvements in their quality of life.
- Participants were less dependent and more engaged in society.

Future research: A large RCT and implementation study is planned for Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania.

Bibliography: