

Clinical Research Results Abstract

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Insights from Photovoice on the impact of socio-cultural factors on people with asthma and limited health literacy in Malaysia.

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Aim: Limited health literacy is associated with poor adherence to self-management activities and poor clinical outcomes. In vulnerable groups such as people with asthma and limited health literacy, socio-cultural pressures may have affected overall health including psychological health. People with limited health literacy may not be able to communicate their psychological health aspect well, verbally. Using the arts-based methodology, Photovoice, we aimed to explore the views and experiences of people with asthma and limited health literacy on managing their condition.

Methods: We purposively sampled adults ≥ 18 years, with asthma and limited health literacy (using health literacy scale, HLS-Q47 (Malay version)) from five primary healthcare clinics in Malaysia. The interviews used a semi-structured topic guide in participants preferred language. Participants were additionally invited to participate in 'Photovoice': (1) One-week photo-taking (2) Post-photo interview. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed thematically.

Results: Twenty-six participants provided in-depth interviews. Eight of these participants completed photovoice activities which provided further insights to the initial interviews. Participants faced multiple challenges to conform to expected social roles (i.e. care-giving role of a daughter-in-law) which may affect their health-seeking behaviour and asthma control. Gender narratives dominate socio-cultural expectations i.e. strong man and obedient wife. Religion shaped experiences of and attitudes towards health, as well as death. These factors influenced how self-management was viewed and practised. Unmet social expectations and constant fear of death led to isolation which significantly impacts on mental health.

Conclusion: Context-specific psychosocial factors influence asthma self-management practices and control. Photovoice allowed further understanding of these psychosocial aspects; giving voice to people with limited health literacy in a multicultural society. A participant who attended the RESPIRE annual meeting in Kuala Lumpur was supported to discuss a Photovoice booklet with key stakeholders and senior guests of the meeting.

Declaration of Interest

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