

Goal setting for patients with multimorbidity in primary care: cluster randomised feasibility trial

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Introduction

- NICE multimorbidity guideline recommends establishing patient goals, values and priorities
- Goal setting has been used in rehabilitation and geriatric medicine
- Little evidence of effectiveness or how to do it for general practitioners (GPs) and patients

Aim: To assess the feasibility of GPs setting goals with patients with multimorbidity, to inform a future definitive trial.

Methods

Design: Cluster randomised controlled feasibility trial with qualitative analysis of video recorded consultations and focus groups

Participants:

- Adults with two or more long term conditions
- In top 2% at risk of unplanned hospital admission

Intervention:

- Training GPs in goal setting
- Asking patients to think about their goals
- Goal setting consultation & 6-month follow-up

Outcomes:

- Standard scales for quality of life (EQ5D), capability (ICECAP-O), and care for chronic conditions (PACIC)
- Health status
- Health care resource use

Qualitative:

- Activity analysis of all video recorded consultations
- Thematic analysis of focus groups with patients and doctor

Results

CHARACTERISTICS	Usual care	Goal-setting
Family practices	n = 3	n = 3
Family doctors	n = 6	n = 5
Patient participants	11 Female 17 Male	13 Female 11 Male
Age (Mean)	77 years	80 years
Number of comorbidities (Median)	4	5
Number of prescribed medicines (Median)	11.5	13.0
No cognitive impairment*	25%	21%

*Assessed by General Practitioner Assessment of Cognition (GPCOG)



Quantitative outcomes showed no substantial differences, as expected for a feasibility study.

Qualitative results:

- Goal setting was acceptable to patients, who wanted more continuity of care to follow up goals
- Both patients and GPs benefitted from preparation before goal setting consultations
- GP participants liked setting goals and felt it helped care be more patient-centred
- The focus groups highlighted a more holistic approach

Conclusions

- Recruitment and retention were sufficient
- A larger, definitive study is needed to establish the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of goal setting

*Doctor participant:
"...it's about recognising the therapeutic power of the consultation"*

*Patient participant:
"...with these consultations, you're actually able to talk to a doctor, as you would indeed a friend almost"*