

A rapid synthesis of the evidence on interventions supporting self-management for people with long-term conditions: PRISMS – Practical systematic Review of Self-Management Support for long-term conditions

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Declared competing interests of authors: Gemma Pearce received expenses from the World Stroke Organization to present this research at their international conference. Hilary Pinnock chairs the self-management evidence review group for the British Thoracic Society/Scottish Intercollegiate Guideline Network Asthma Guideline. No other author has any competing interest to declare.

Published December 2014

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr02530

Plain English summary

Review of self-management support for LTCs

Health Services and Delivery Research 2014; Vol. 2: No. 53

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr02530

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Plain English summary

Everyone who has a long-term condition (LTC), such as arthritis or asthma, has to deal with (or 'self-manage') their condition, sometimes with the help of a spouse, friends or a carer. In addition to physical symptoms, LTCs often have social and emotional effects on people.

We were commissioned to look at what can be done to support self-management across a wide range of LTCs and to make suggestions to those providing health services. We did this by systematically summarising the research that has been done in the area.

We concluded that supporting good self-management is inseparable from the high-quality care all people with LTCs should receive. Supporting self-management is not a substitute for care from doctors and nurses but a hallmark of good care. Providers of services for people with LTCs should consider how they can actively support self-management.

Effective self-management support usually has many components, should be flexible, tailored to the individual and their LTC, and be underpinned by good collaboration between the patient and a trusted health-care professional, all within a health-care organisation that actively promotes self-management.

Although many different ways to support self-management have been tested no one stood out as more important than any other. Key activities include (1) provision of knowledge and information about the LTC; (2) psychological strategies to support people adjusting to life with a LTC; (3) practical support for physical care tailored to the specific LTC; (4) action plans for LTCs that may deteriorate; and (5) social support as appropriate.

Other potentially effective components include self-monitoring with feedback and practical support with adherence strategies.

Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

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The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its proceeding programmes as project number 11/1014/04. The contractual start date was in April 2012. The final report began editorial review in June 2013 and was accepted for publication in December 2013. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

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