

Factors which facilitate or impede patient engagement with pulmonary and cardiac rehabilitation: a rapid evaluation mapping review

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Disclosure of interests

Full disclosure of interests: Completed ICMJE forms for all authors, including all related interests, are available in the toolkit on the NIHR Journals Library report publication page at <https://doi.org/10.3310/KLWR9463>.

Primary conflicts of interest: Andrew Booth is a member of the NIHR HSDR Funding Committee and the NIHR Systematic Reviews Advisory Group, and Convenor of the Cochrane Qualitative and Implementation Methods Group.

Funding: NIHR Health Services and Delivery Research Programme (project number NIHR135449).

Study registration: The study protocol is registered with PROSPERO [CRD42022309214].

Published May 2023

DOI: 10.3310/KLWR9463

Plain language summary

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Health and Social Care Delivery Research 2023; Vol. 11: No. 4

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NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain language summary

While we know quite a lot about what makes rehabilitation for heart (cardiac) or lung (pulmonary) conditions effective, less is known about how to engage people with these services and how to encourage them to continue to attend. We have looked at what studies have already been done to summarise the factors that affect whether someone chooses to attend rehabilitation and what is being tried to improve rates of attendance. We were particularly interested in people who are less likely to attend for rehabilitation. We searched in research databases for studies published since 2017 that included UK patients and services.

We found 17 relevant summary papers which included a total of 52 UK studies. Most of these papers looked at the factors that affect attendance at rehabilitation, with far fewer studies considering ways to improve attendance. There were more studies looking at rehabilitation for cardiac than pulmonary conditions. Whether someone attended rehabilitation was affected by factors such as whether they felt supported, cultural and personal factors, practical factors such as travel and access, plus patient health, emotions, knowledge and beliefs about rehabilitation services. From a staff perspective, knowledge (staff and patient), staffing levels, level of service provision, and referral from other services were believed to affect attendance. We found a few studies where changes had been made to try to improve access including a number of studies of online delivery of rehabilitation services during COVID-19. Our summary of the factors that affect attendance at rehabilitation may be helpful to inform services about what changes they should make in the future to improve levels of attendance.

Health and Social Care Delivery Research

ISSN 2755-0060 (Print)

ISSN 2755-0079 (Online)

Health and Social Care Delivery Research (HSDR) was launched in 2013 and is indexed by Europe PMC, DOAJ, INAHTA, Ulrichsweb™ (ProQuest LLC, Ann Arbor, MI, USA) and NCBI Bookshelf.

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (www.publicationethics.org/).

Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk

This journal was previously published as *Health Services and Delivery Research* (Volumes 1–9); ISSN 2050-4349 (print), ISSN 2050-4357 (online)

The full HSDR archive is freely available to view online at www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/hsdr.

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HSDR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number NIHR135449. The contractual start date was in November 2021. The final report began editorial review in May 2022 and was accepted for publication in October 2022. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HSDR 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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