

Exploring the experiences of older adults living with asthma: a co-produced qualitative study

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BACKGROUND

- In the UK, **1 in 12 adults** has asthma
- Asthma is often considered a disease of childhood and there is a **lack of research** into asthma in older adults
- Asthma is often **underdiagnosed, undertreated and poorly self-managed** in older adults.
- Older adults are the fastest growing population in the UK and it is essential to understand the experiences and needs of this group

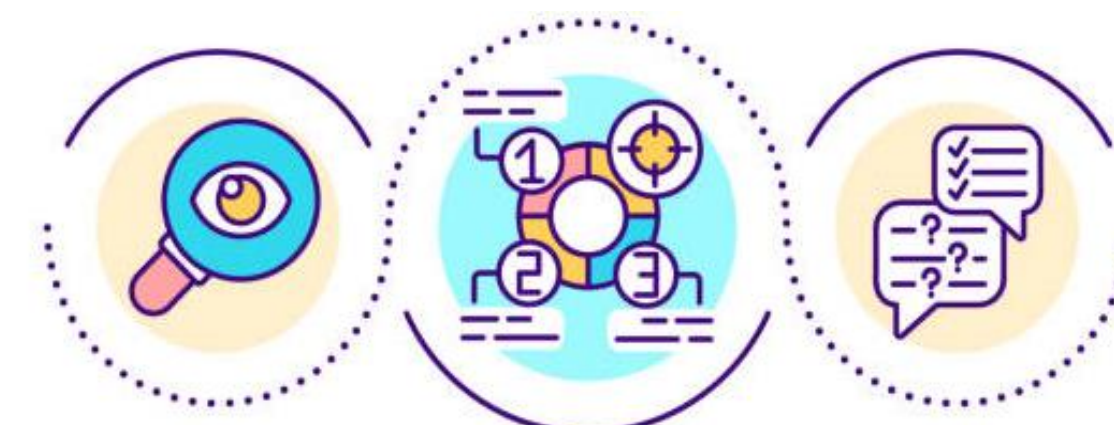


AIM

This study aimed to **explore the experiences of older adults** in the UK with asthma, on their asthma management, the impact on their lives and if their asthma has changed over the years.

METHODS

- **Fifteen semi-structured interviews** were conducted with individuals aged **60 years or over** with a diagnosis of asthma
- Participants were recruited from across the UK through the REACH database, AUKCAR Patient Advisory Group and snowball sampling
- Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed using **thematic analysis** (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- This study was co-produced with an **AUKCAR Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Lead** and guided by the NIHR UK standards for Public Involvement to ensure meaningful involvement of patient and public members



Qualitative Research



RESULTS

"my primary care team...**they tend to be very dismissive** of [side effects]. Just say, "oh well, **that's something you've got to live with**"."

"younger ones tend to be more controlled because they've got parents looking after them...**with an older person, you're left to swim along**."

"it didn't affect my life very much early on...It didn't stop me...now... **it's tiring really**."

"I've got **arthritic fingers**, if you're trying to take a deep breath and depress the inhaler at the same time, with your cranky fingers, **it's actually quite hard**"

"I don't get to the point where I am struggling to breathe anymore. **I can manage to regulate it** so that I don't get to that stage"

"it would be a good idea to do a bit **more work with older people**... there's going to be more of us around"

INTERACTION WITH HEALTHCARE

"I've moved three times, **depending on where I live**, the standard of asthma care from the primary health care team **varies tremendously**."

MANAGING ASTHMA

"**I've done it for so long**...I keep them all in the same place having divided the week's doses...**it's just part of the routine**"

IMPACT ON DAILY LIVING

"I have had asthma attacks...**you get very worried** about them. You get worried about what is going to happen."

BALANCING ASTHMA WITH OTHER CONDITIONS

"the doctor has wanted to give me a medication, and they have had to say "oh no, **you can't have that because you're asthmatic**"

UNDERSTANDING OF ASTHMA

"there is **more emphasis on childhood asthma**, in general, in the press"

RESEARCH PRIORITIES

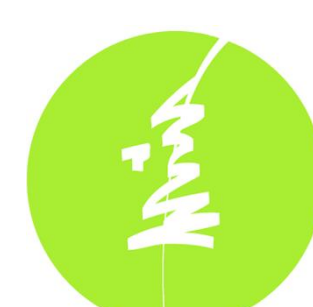
"I'd like them to **research a simpler treatment**...so that you can just take one convenient tablet or capsule"

DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS

- Asthma **impacts the lives of older adults** through the burden of **symptoms**, medication **side effects** and **limitations** on daily activities. It also presents a **psychological burden** and increases anxiety levels.
- Older adults with asthma have **variable quality of asthma care** and can experience **ageism** from the health service
- Society **lacks awareness** of asthma in older people which is reflected in the **lack of research** for this age group.
- Further **research is needed** into asthma management and treatment for this age group. There was also a desire for simpler, easier to use treatment options to **reduce the burden of management**, which is often high due to competing multimorbidities.
- The results of this study will be used to **inform the research priorities** of AUKCAR in this area with a view to improving this population's quality of life.



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