Health literacy degree in relation to the severity and risk of COPD

POSTER PRESENTATION

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RATIONALE

The impact on health outcomes with regard to the communication gap between providers and health-care users is frequently neglected in spite of the evidence that if patients cannot fully comprehend the messages from healthcare providers they are less likely to adhere to the care plans supplied by the health professionals. There is little information worldwide about the impact of health literacy on clinical outcomes of COPD and none in Spain. Our aim was to evaluate the impact of health literacy as measured by the Short Assessment of Health Literacy for Spanish Adults (SAHLSA) questionnaire on the exacerbation rate (≥ 2 reported exacerbations or, assistance at the ER) throughout one year.

METHODS

Multicenter prospective cohort study of COPD patients (GOLD 2010 stages II-IV) enrolled consecutively at 102 sites across Spain. Patients were followed-up for one year.

RESULTS

297 COPD patients with a mean age of 67 years (47% stage II, 41% stage III and 11% stage IV) were studied. Only 43.4% of the patients showed “adequate” literacy (i.e. >37 points) with a median score of 35 (ICR 31-30). 104 (62%) of the patients with low heath literacy level and 62 (48%) of those with high level had exacerbation (p=0.025 after adjusting for age, sex and Carlson comorbidity index)

CONCLUSIONS

Health literacy is not sufficient for understanding written instructions in as much as 50% of COPD subjects. Low health literacy is related to relevant clinical outcomes of the disease and therefore needs to be considered when planning the care of COPD patients.