

Prioritising the respiratory research needs of primary care: the International Primary Care Respiratory Group (IPCRG) e-Delphi exercise

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Abstract

Background: Community-based care, underpinned by relevant primary care research, is an important component of the global fight against non-communicable diseases. The International Primary Care Research Group's (IPCRG's) Research Needs Statement identified 145 research questions within five domains (asthma, rhinitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), smoking, respiratory infections).

Aims: To use an e-mail Delphi process to prioritise the research questions.

Methods: An international panel of primary care clinicians scored the clinical importance, feasibility, and international relevance of each question on a scale of 1-5 (5 = most important). In subsequent rounds, informed by the Group's median scores, participants scored overall priority. Consensus was defined as 80% agreement for priority scores 4 or 5.

Results: Twenty-three experts from 21 countries completed all three rounds. Sixty-two questions were prioritised across the five domains. A recurring theme was for 'simple tools' (e.g. questionnaires) enabling diagnosis and assessment in community settings, often with limited access to investigations. Seven questions recorded 100% agreement: these involved pragmatic approaches to the diagnosis of COPD and rhinitis, assessment of asthma and respiratory infections, management of rhinitis, and implementing asthma self-management.

Conclusion: Evidence to underpin the primary care approach to diagnosis and assessment and broad management strategies were overarching priorities. If primary care is to contribute to the global challenge of managing respiratory non-communicable diseases, policymakers, funders, and researchers need to prioritise these questions.

Keywords: non-communicable diseases, primary care, research priorities, respiratory medicine, IPCRG

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Both the Research Needs Statement and the e-Delphi prioritisation exercise are published by the Primary Care Respiratory Journal and are freely available on line <http://www.thepcrj.org/>