

Educating adults with a chronic disease to live their everyday life: a state of the art - work in progress

The aim of this paper is to present the results of a state of the art regarding existing knowledge of educating adults to live their everyday life with the chronic disease "affective disorder". The findings will be discussed in relation to further research efforts.

Today the Danish health care system expects adults with chronic diseases to take responsibility and learn to handle their disease as independent as possible. 1,7 million of all 5,5 million Danes suffered from one or more chronic diseases in 2005. This number is expected to increase in the years to come, due to changes in the Danish demography such as composition of population, life expectancy and lifestyles. Today 70-80% of health care resources are spent on care and treatment of adults with chronic diseases.

This state of the art is based on research articles reporting empirical studies from 2000-2011. The search strategy is divided into two parts. Part one is a 'building block' search strategy covering 1) the context; everyday life, 2) the group of people; adults with affective disorder, 3) the phenomenon; adult education. Part two is a review of reference lists from eight significant reports.

The preliminary findings, based on the eight reports, point towards a limited evidence for the effect of psychological treatments combined with pharmacotherapy. The subjects in psychological treatments can contain learning about the disease, learning how to manage the disease and accepting the disease. Apparently there is no focus on didactical aspects of the treatment, hence a lack of knowledge of e.g. learning processes and factors that facilitate or limit transfer between the education (psychological treatment) and the people's everyday life. Furthermore the treatments potential efficacy found in randomized controlled trials seems to be considerably larger than the treatment effect in clinical practice – the so called efficacy-effectiveness-gap. This might indicate that it is relevant to follow adults with affective disorder in naturalistic studies in order to develop a model illustrating factors that facilitate, limit or obstruct the transfer from education in clinical practice to the adult's everyday life.

Those factors may be used to improve the education and thereby contribute to enhance quality of life for the ascending number of adults with chronic diseases and this might also be useful in allocating the resources effectively.