Using qualitative methods to design a strategy for implementation of intensive combination treatment strategies for rheumatoid arthritis: an illustration

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Co-promoters: Prof. dr. René Westhovens & Prof. dr. Marlies Hulscher
Disclosures

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Background

Theoretical acceptance: 

To treat RA, the focus is set to achieve clinical remission as soon as possible with an early and intensive treatment.

Practical implementation:

- **Early treatment:** 21% of patients (Flanders, 2012)¹
- **Intensive treatment:** 18% of patients (Flanders, 2006)²

Adherence to medication in patients with RA: 30 to 80%³

**REFERENCES**

Aims

Identification of implementation issues + Solution-oriented research → Implementation strategy
Aims

Exploring and identifying the factors influencing the implementation of intensive combination treatment strategies

- Experiences and views of healthcare professionals
- Experiences and views of patients with early RA
# Methods: Two qualitative interview studies

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<tr>
<th>Study 1</th>
<th>Study 2</th>
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<td>January → April 2012</td>
<td>April 2012 → April 2013</td>
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<td>26 individual interviews with rheumatologists</td>
<td>Time point 1: Four to six months after treatment initiation</td>
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<td>6 individual interviews with nurses</td>
<td>Individual interviews with 26 patients with early RA</td>
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<td>5 direct observations at outpatient clinics</td>
<td>Time point 2: One year after treatment initiation</td>
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<td>Focus group interviews with 14/26 patients with early RA</td>
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## Methods: Two qualitative interview studies

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**Study 1**
- 26 individual interviews with rheumatologists
- 6 individual interviews with nurses
- 5 direct observations at outpatient clinics

**Time point 1:**
- Four to six months after treatment initiation
- Individual interviews with 25 patients with early RA

**Time point 2:**
- One year after treatment initiation
- Focus group interviews with 14/25 patients with early RA

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Investigators in CareRA trial

Subjects in CareRA trial
CareRA trial

Study design

All patients

Low risk

25%

High Risk

75%

Tight step up

INDUCTION COBRA SLIM

INDUCTION COBRA

INDUCTION COBRA SLIM

INDUCTION COBRA AVANTGARDE
Results: Factors identified by healthcare professionals

- Treatment-related factors
- Healthcare professional-related factors
- Patient-related factors
- Environment-related factors
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- **Treatment-related factors**
  - Value of combination therapy
  - Preference for individual compounds
  - Need for patient education about the therapy at initiation

- **Healthcare professional-related factors**

- **Patient-related factors**

- **Environment-related factors**
Results: Factors identified by healthcare professionals

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- Value of combination therapy
- Preference for individual compounds
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**Healthcare professional-related factors**
- Scientific evidence
- Individual preferences
- Education
- Difficulties of breaking out of routines

**Patient-related factors**

**Environment-related factors**
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**Patient-related factors**
- Patient characteristics
- Perceived patient attitude
- Relationship with patient

**Environment-related factors**
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Patient-related factors
- Patient characteristics
- Perceived patient attitude
- Relationship with patient

Environment-related factors
- Treatment costs
- Work environment
- Staff support
- Collaboration with healthcare professionals outside one’s own organisation
- Time constraints
- Financial support
“Recently I received an e-mail from someone stating she wanted to try some alternative treatment first. Before that, I saw her two times. The first time we talked about half an hour, the second time for more than an hour. But despite that, she decided to quit anyway. Most of the time it are younger people, who are educated and smart, but still afraid. I find that hard to understand, since you get the opportunity to get better. It is a shame that people take that step. I also told her and explained her clearly. I responded that this is not the responsible way of treating. But she called me and told me she wanted to try anyway and she gave herself two months. But time is running. We will see…”
Results: Factors identified by patients with early RA

- Treatment-related factors
- Healthcare professional-related factors
- Patient-related factors
- Environment-related factors
Results: Factors identified by patients with early RA

Treatment-related factors
- Number of medication
- Preference for individual compounds
- Effect on symptoms and drug side effects

Healthcare professional-related factors

Patient-related factors

Environment-related factors
Results: Factors identified by patients with early RA

Treatment-related factors
- Number of medication
- Preference for individual compounds
- Effect on symptoms and drug side effects

Healthcare professional-related factors
- Relationship with healthcare professional(s)

Patient-related factors

Environment-related factors
Results: Factors identified by patients with early RA

Treatment-related factors
- Number of medication
- Preference for individual compounds
- Effect on symptoms and drug side effects

Healthcare professional-related factors
- Relationship with healthcare professional(s)

Patient-related factors
- Patients’ feelings
- Patients’ beliefs
- Patients’ knowledge

Environment-related factors
## Results: Factors identified by patients with early RA

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treatment-related factors</strong></td>
<td>Number of medication, Preference for individual compounds, Effect on symptoms and drug side effects</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Healthcare professional-related factors</strong></td>
<td>Relationship with healthcare professional(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patient-related factors</strong></td>
<td>Patients’ feelings, Patients’ beliefs, Patients’ knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment-related factors</strong></td>
<td>Treatment costs, Healthcare team, Information provision, Daily schedules</td>
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“P1: I find it[pillbox] very easy. It stays always in my view. It happened really automatically.
P2: Yes, that is right. I also use it for my other pills.
P1: Yes, because otherwise with all those boxes it is immediately a large amount and now it is very compact.
P3: That is why I say that it would be useful to receive such a pillbox.
P4: My husband and I we both have pills to take in the morning and evening, and they are always ready for him. And I have a tupperware box and I have all my medication boxes in it. And it is going well. But it is a habit because I am doing it together with my husband. I never had problems forgetting my pills. When you leave, for example, we do remind each other.
P1: And if you once go out to eat or do something, you put that box in your bag and you have your pills with you.”
Future research

Identification of implementation issues

Solution-oriented research

Implementation strategy

Problem solving research

• Maximum Difference Scaling survey
• Systematic review

Raising awareness and recruiting working group members

• Invitational conference

Creation of an implementation and evaluation plan

• Working group meetings
Bottom line

• The heterogeneous set of factors identified related to the treatment, healthcare professional, patient and/or environment demonstrate the complexity of implementing intensive combination treatment strategies in daily clinical practice.

• Improvement strategies are required to bring the quality of early RA care at an optimal level.

• The development of implementation strategies requires further exploration:
  - Quantifying relative impact of the factors
  - Describing specific change targets
  - Selection of strategies
Thank you

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