

Asthma self-management at work: a mixed methods study

Asthma is often associated with experienced impairment in patients' everyday life, such as reduced working ability and employability. The severity or prognosis of asthma does not only depend on competent medical care, but also on effective self-management. The successful implementation of disease-self-management in everyday life – especially at work – is contingent upon contextual factors. This project aims at examining a) the determinants of successful asthma self-management at work as well as b) potentially promising interventions.

The ongoing study draws on a sequential-explorative mixed methods design: First, by conducting qualitative interviews we explored which work-related factors promote or impair effective self-management at work and which interventions could be promising from the asthma-affected employees' point of view. Next, a questionnaire was developed to assess the identified factors, which was then optimized by means of cognitive interviews.

Eventually, the questionnaire was employed in a larger survey and psychometrically examined in the next step. In addition, correlations of the identified contextual factors with asthma self-management as well as with secondary outcomes – such as asthma-specific morbidity indicators and the subjective employment prospects – were examined. Finally, potential interventions to optimize asthma-relevant working conditions were evaluated with regard to their meaningfulness and feasibility using semi-structured interviews with clinicians and occupational physicians.

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