PROJECT INFORMATION

June 2020

Comparing Two Programs for Helping Patients Make Informed Decisions about Rheumatoid Arthritis Treatment

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What was the research about?

Rheumatoid arthritis, or RA, is a health problem in which the immune system attacks healthy tissue. RA can cause damage to joints, the heart, and lungs and limit people's ability to do daily activities. Medicines for RA can control these problems but can also have serious side effects.

In this study, the research team wanted to learn if two programs, used alone or together, helped patients make informed decisions about RA medicines. One program trained patients in gist reasoning. Gist reasoning is making decisions by finding the main idea in complex information. The other program gave patients easy-to-read RA medicine guides. To look at informed decision making, the team studied changes in the number of patients who

- Had high knowledge about RA and treatment options
- Were using a treatment consistent with their values

What were the results?

Among all patients in the study, the gist reasoning program and the easy-to-read guides didn't affect informed decision making about RA medicines.

The research team also looked at patients who didn't meet their definition of informed decision making at the start of the study. Among these patients, those in the gist reasoning program were more likely to meet

this definition at six months than those who weren't in the program.

Who was in the study?

The study included 219 patients with RA. The research team enrolled patients online. The team also recruited patients from four large RA clinics across the United States. Of patients, 75 percent were white, and 25 percent were other races. The average age was 55, and 90 percent were women.

What did the research team do?

The research team assigned patients by chance to one of four groups:

- Gist reasoning training program and easy-to-read guides
- Gist reasoning training program and standard guides
- Easy-to-read guides alone
- Standard guides alone

The training program included four 60- to 90-minute online training sessions. The sessions focused on building skills in focusing attention, combining information from many sources, and balancing viewpoints.

The easy-to-read guides covered the 16 most common RA medicines. Each guide summarized the medicine's

benefits and harms. The guides also had links to other information about the medicine. The standard guides provided information patients currently receive with their prescription medicines.

Patients filled out surveys on their knowledge, values, and medicine use at the start of the study and six months later.

Patients with RA and doctors provided input throughout the study.

What were the limits of the study?

In this study, 34 percent of patients in the gist reasoning training program dropped out versus

13 percent of those who weren't in the program. Also, only 39 percent of patients viewed either type of medicine guide. These factors may have affected the study's results.

Future research could continue to look at ways to help patients make informed decisions about RA medicines.

How can people use the results?

Health clinics could use these results when considering ways to support patients with RA with medicine choices.

To learn more about this project, visit www.pcori.org/Blalock323.