PROJECT INFORMATION

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Comparing Different Ways of Asking People with Type 2 Diabetes about Their Care Priorities and Preferences

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What was the research about?

Researchers often use surveys to learn about what patients prefer. The wording of survey questions may affect how patients answer.

In this study, the research team compared different ways of asking patients with type 2 diabetes questions in a national survey. The questions asked patients about managing their diabetes and the medicines they prefer. The team wanted to see how accurately the different ways of asking questions measured patients' preferences. The study looked at whether patients thought the different ways of asking questions

- Were easy to understand and answer
- Led to answers that matched what patients really wanted

What were the results?

Managing diabetes. The team compared two ways to ask patients questions about issues important for managing their diabetes, such as being able to get healthy food. One way asked patients to rate each issue on a number scale with five choices. The choices ranged from -2 for a strong, negative impact on managing diabetes to +2 for a strong, positive impact on managing diabetes. The other way showed patients a short list of issues and asked them to choose what was best and worst in helping them manage diabetes.

Patients found it easier to understand and answer the questions that asked them to rate issues on a number scale. Rating issues on a number scale led to answers that were closer to what patients really wanted. But those who answered questions using the number scale tended to pick only the positive choices. Patients who chose between best or worst had more balanced answers.

Medicine preference. The team also compared two ways to ask patients questions about which medicines they prefer. One way showed patients several pairs of medicines. Each pair had two medicines with different characteristics shown side-by-side. The team asked patients to choose the medicine they liked better from each pair. The other way showed patients one medicine at a time. Patients chose which characteristic of that medicine was the best and which was the worst. Patients found it easier to understand the questions that asked them to choose the medicine they liked better from each pair. But patients didn't find either way of asking questions easier to answer or closer to what they really wanted. Answers to questions that asked patients to choose the best and worst characteristics were more consistent.

Who was in the study?

The study included 1,103 adults with type 2 diabetes. Of these patients, 52 percent were white, 23 percent were black, 21 percent were Hispanic, and 4 percent were of another race. The average patient age was 62, and 50 percent of patients were male.

What did the research team do?

The research team created different ways to ask patients questions about managing their diabetes and which medicines patients prefer. The team sent the questions to patients in a national survey.

Then, the team assigned patients by chance to one of the two ways of asking questions. Patients either rated how important issues were for managing diabetes using a number scale or they chose which issues from the list were best and worst in helping them manage their diabetes. For questions about medicine preferences, patients either picked the medicine they liked better from two choices or chose which characteristics of one medicine were the best and worst.

Next, the team compared patients' answers to the different ways of asking questions. The team looked to see if patients thought the questions were easy to understand and answer and led to answers that matched what they really wanted.

The research team worked with patients, community members, and diabetes experts during the study.

What were the limits of the study?

The study didn't look at all ways to ask survey questions. Also, the study only included adults with type 2 diabetes who had internet access.

Future research could look at other ways to ask patients with type 2 diabetes or other health problems questions about their care preferences.

How can people use the results?

Patient organizations, clinicians, and researchers can use the results when deciding how best to collect information about what patients prefer.

To learn more about this project, visit pcori.org/Bridges086.