

The EPOC Study: Exploring Pathways to Optimise Care in malignant bowel obstruction

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BACKGROUND

Fifteen per cent of people with cancer experience a blockage in their bowels caused by the disease. This is known as malignant bowel obstruction or MBO. MBO prevents people from eating and drinking, and can cause intense pain, nausea and vomiting. The symptoms are distressing for patients and caregivers.

Various treatment options are available, and decision-making is complex. There are few evidence-based guidelines, and national health care practice varies. Every patient's situation is unique. Regardless of treatment choice, outcomes are uncertain, and this causes patients and caregivers additional distress.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

- ✚ To explore how decision-making happens in the management of malignant bowel obstruction, and how patients and caregivers are involved in the process.
- ✚ To develop guidance for patients and training for practitioners to clarify and enhance communications around treatment choice.

METHODS

EPOC is a 3-phase study using realist methods (see study protocol link below). Analysis will focus on:

- ✚ how patients' values and preferences are considered during communication around treatment decision-making;
- ✚ how decisions are affected by who is providing the care, or where it takes place (hospital, hospice or at home);
- ✚ how communication and context influence patient-centred outcomes.



Visual methods

Interviews will use timelines (below left) to map treatment decision-making points, and the Pictor technique (above/below) to map collaborative processes, using arrows to represent the people involved in decision-making.

STUDY PHASES

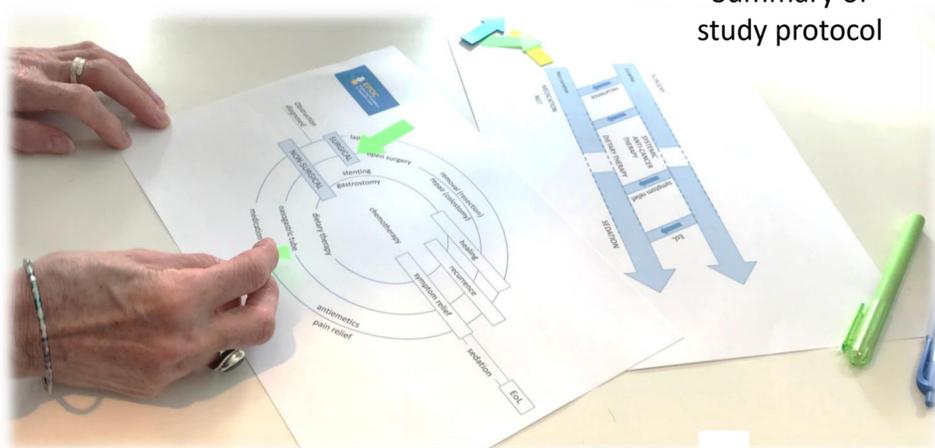
LITERATURE REVIEW using realist review methods to explore a wide range of documents for clues about decision-making in MBO and provide guidance for conducting interviews.



Summary of study protocol

INTERVIEW STUDY using visual methods to help patients, caregivers and practitioners explore how treatment decision-making happens in practice, and to map the MBO decision-making process.

INTERVENTION DESIGN using a framework which involves patients, caregivers and practitioners in developing information and training to enhance communication around treatment choices in MBO.



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