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## Analysis of healthcare professionals' perceptions of therapeutic education in hematology

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### Abstract

This article presents a qualitative analysis of healthcare professionals' perceptions of therapeutic patient education (TPE) in hematology. TPE is recognized as essential in managing chronic hematological diseases, enabling patients to better understand and manage their condition. The study reveals that healthcare professionals view TPE positively, emphasizing its crucial role in patient autonomy and therapeutic adherence. However, several barriers to its implementation are identified, including lack of time, inadequate educational resources, and insufficient continuous training. Professionals suggest improvements such as dedicating more time to TPE and introducing more interactive teaching materials. They also underline the importance of continuous training to better integrate TPE into clinical practice. The study concludes that TPE not only enhances patients' disease management but also improves the caregiver-patient relationship, contributing to better clinical outcomes.

**Keywords:** TPE; Chronic disease; Healthcare professionals' perception; Caregiver-patient relationship

### 1. Introduction

Therapeutic patient education (TPE) plays a significant role in managing chronic diseases. In hematology, the complexity of conditions and prolonged treatments require active patient involvement. TPE aims to make patients more autonomous by equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and manage their disease daily (1). However, the implementation of TPE largely depends on the perceptions and practices of healthcare professionals, who are the main actors in this educational approach(2).

In hematology, conditions such as leukemias, lymphomas, and other blood disorders necessitate a tailored educational approach due to their often-severe nature and extended treatment durations. Healthcare professionals play a central role in supporting patients, not only by providing care but also by educating them about their condition and supporting them throughout their therapeutic journey. Their perception of TPE directly impacts the quality and effectiveness of established programs, as well as patients' engagement with these initiatives.

Despite the undisputed importance of TPE, several studies highlight the challenges healthcare professionals face in its effective implementation. These challenges include a lack of time, limited resources, and communication difficulties with patients. Furthermore, healthcare professionals' attitudes and beliefs can vary based on their training, experience, and specialization, leading to disparities in TPE application.

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It is thus imperative to analyze healthcare professionals' perceptions of TPE in hematology to better understand the factors facilitating or hindering this approach. A deeper understanding of these perceptions could help develop targeted strategies to improve TPE integration into clinical practice(3,4).

This qualitative study aims to explore the perceptions of healthcare professionals in hematology, highlighting both the positive aspects of their experience and the challenges they face. The goal is to gather detailed data to formulate practical recommendations for optimizing TPE in this specific field.

This article seeks to enhance understanding of how healthcare professionals perceive and implement TPE in hematology, providing perspectives to improve program effectiveness and, consequently, patient outcomes.

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## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Study Type**

The study is qualitative, examining healthcare professionals' perceptions of TPE in hematology. This approach was chosen for its ability to yield rich, detailed data, illuminating participants' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences—essential for understanding TPE dynamics in a specific context.

### **2.2. Participants**

The sample comprises 15 healthcare professionals working in hematology (7 physicians and 8 nurses). Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which ensures inclusion based on relevant experience and involvement. The sample size was determined according to the principle of data saturation, stopping when interviews yielded no new information.

### **2.3. Data Collection**

Data were collected between January and February 2024 through semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen for its ability to guide discussions while allowing participants to express their experiences and perceptions freely. An interview guide with open-ended questions was prepared, covering various aspects of TPE, such as understanding its objectives, challenges faced, and strategies employed to overcome these difficulties. Interviews were recorded (with participant consent) and fully transcribed for analysis.

### **2.4. Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within the data. Transcriptions were reviewed multiple times for familiarization, followed by initial coding to identify relevant text segments. These codes were then grouped into broader themes reflecting healthcare professionals' perceptions. Analysis was conducted inductively, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data without a pre-established theoretical framework.

### **2.5. Reliability and Validity**

To ensure rigor, several strategies were employed. Data triangulation involved comparing perspectives from different professional groups. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants to verify that the interpretations accurately reflected their perceptions. Finally, a reflective journal documented the researcher's data collection and analysis process and personal reflections potentially influencing interpretations. Participant anonymity and data confidentiality were maintained throughout.

### **2.6. Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to ethical principles, obtaining informed consent from participants prior to inclusion. Participant anonymity was guaranteed, and data were handled confidentially. The research protocol was approved by an ethics committee under the reference number 74/2024.

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## **3. Results**

### **3.1. General Perceptions of Healthcare Professionals on TPE in Hematology**

The healthcare professionals interviewed expressed an overall positive perception of Therapeutic Patient Education (TPE) in hematology, considering it a key element in the management of patients with hematological diseases. The

majority of participants emphasized that TPE enables patients to better understand their illness, feel more involved in their treatment, and adopt behaviors that are beneficial to their health. One hematologist said: *“TPE is essential. It allows patients to understand the stakes of their treatment and become active participants in their own health. This is especially important in the context of pathologies as complex as those we encounter in hematology.”* Specialized nurses also highlighted the impact of TPE on treatment adherence, noting that better-informed patients were more likely to properly follow their treatments and proactively report side effects.

### 3.2. Challenges Encountered During Patient Education

Despite the recognition of the importance of TPE, several challenges were identified by healthcare professionals. The lack of time was mentioned by all participants as the main obstacle to the effective implementation of TPE. One doctor explained:

*“Time is a real challenge. We have very busy consultations, and it is difficult to find enough time to conduct therapeutic education properly. Sometimes, we must settle for the essentials, which is not always enough for the patients.”*

Additionally, participants noted a lack of specific resources, such as educational materials suited to the various levels of patient understanding. Some professionals also mentioned a lack of continuing education in TPE, which limits their ability to use innovative teaching approaches and incorporate new knowledge into their practice.

### 3.3. Patients' Perceptions of TPE

Healthcare professionals reported that patients' perceptions of TPE were generally positive, although some patients were initially reluctant. Well-informed patients often expressed a sense of empowerment and better management of their condition. One nurse mentioned:

*“Well-informed patients often become more independent and confident. They ask more questions, are more engaged in their treatment, and are more proactive in managing their health.”*

However, it was noted that some patients, particularly those dealing with emotional burdens or high levels of stress, may struggle to absorb information. Professionals emphasized the importance of creating TPE programs tailored to the individual needs of patients to overcome these obstacles.

### 3.4. Suggestions for Improving TPE

Participants made several suggestions to improve TPE in hematology. The first suggestion was to allocate more time specifically for TPE in consultation schedules, allowing healthcare providers to give patients the attention they need. Another recommendation was to invest in the creation of more diverse educational materials, including digital and interactive tools that could make information more accessible.

Finally, several professionals stressed the need for ongoing training for healthcare teams to keep them up-to-date with best practices in TPE and to integrate these practices into their daily interactions with patients. One doctor summarized this idea by saying:

*“We need continuous training to adapt to the rapid developments in TPE. This would allow us to provide even better support to our patients.”*

### 3.5. Impact of TPE on the Healthcare Provider-Patient Relationship

Another key finding of the study was the positive impact of TPE on the relationship between healthcare providers and patients. Professionals noted that TPE fosters more open communication and strengthens patient trust in the healthcare team. This dynamic was seen as beneficial not only for improving treatment adherence but also for the psychological well-being of patients. One nurse described: *“TPE really improves our relationship with patients. They feel listened to, understood, and this strengthens their trust in us. It's a virtuous circle that benefits everyone.”*

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## 4. Discussion

The results of this study highlight contrasting perceptions among healthcare professionals regarding TPE in hematology, revealing both the perceived importance of TPE and the barriers hindering its effective implementation. This discussion aims to interpret these findings in light of existing literature, identify practical implications for hematology care, and propose recommendations for improving current practices.

#### **4.1. Recognition of the Importance of TPE in Hematology**

Healthcare professionals unanimously acknowledged the importance of TPE in the management of hematological patients. This aligns with the literature, which emphasizes that TPE is particularly crucial in the management of chronic diseases, where it contributes to patient empowerment, better understanding of their condition, and increased treatment adherence(5–7). In hematology, where diseases are often severe and require complex treatments, TPE plays a crucial role in allowing patients to actively participate in their care, reducing the risk of non-adherence, and improving clinical outcomes(8).

However, despite the widespread recognition of TPE's importance, its implementation remains a challenge, as highlighted by several participants. This gap between the recognition of the importance of TPE and its actual implementation warrants particular attention and reflects structural issues within healthcare institutions.

#### **4.2. Time and Resource Challenges**

The lack of time was identified as the main barrier to the implementation of TPE by all healthcare professionals interviewed. This challenge is not unique to hematology; it is widely documented in the literature as a common barrier to TPE across various medical contexts (9,10). Time constraints limit healthcare providers' ability to engage in in-depth discussions with patients and provide education that is tailored to their needs. In a context where consultations are often busy, it becomes difficult for healthcare professionals to dedicate sufficient time to TPE, which may compromise the quality of information provided and the overall effectiveness of education programs.

In addition to time, the lack of specific resources, such as tailored educational materials, was also mentioned. This resource shortage limits the ability of healthcare professionals to adapt TPE to the varying levels of patient understanding(11). Participants expressed a need for more diversified and interactive educational materials, a demand echoed in the literature, where the use of visual and digital tools is highlighted as greatly enhancing patient information retention.

#### **4.3. Continuing Education for Healthcare Professionals**

Another major challenge identified was the lack of continuing education in TPE for healthcare professionals. Although participants had a general understanding of TPE, they expressed the need for more in-depth training to improve their teaching skills and integrate the latest advances in therapeutic education. Continuing education is crucial to maintaining a high level of competency in TPE(12), as it allows healthcare professionals to adapt to changes in medical practices and patient needs(13,14). Regular training programs could therefore enhance the ability of healthcare providers to implement TPE more effectively and individually.

#### **4.4. Patient Perceptions: Engagement and Emotional Challenges**

Healthcare professionals' perceptions of patient engagement in TPE were mostly positive, with many examples of patients becoming more independent and proactive after participating in TPE programs. These results are consistent with previous studies that show(6,15,16) that TPE can lead to better disease management by patients and improvements in their quality of life. However, it is important to note that some patients may experience difficulties fully engaging in TPE, particularly those dealing with emotional burdens or high stress levels. This observation is supported by the literature, which suggests that patients' psychological state can influence their ability to absorb information and actively participate in TPE(17,18). To overcome these challenges, it is crucial that TPE programs be designed to be flexible and tailored to the individual needs of patients, including psychological support for those who require it(8).

#### **4.5. Improvement of TPE: Perspectives and Recommendations**

The suggestions made by healthcare professionals to improve TPE in hematology provide valuable insights. Allocating more time for TPE in consultation schedules is a key recommendation, reflecting a need to reorganize priorities within healthcare services to better integrate TPE. Moreover, investing in more diverse educational materials, including digital tools, could facilitate patient learning and improve the effectiveness of TPE programs. The emphasis on continuous training for healthcare professionals is also an essential recommendation. By ensuring regular access to specialized training, healthcare institutions can improve the quality of TPE offered, ensuring that healthcare providers are well-prepared to meet the complex needs of hematological patients.

#### 4.6. Impact on the Healthcare Provider-Patient Relationship

Finally, the positive impact of TPE on the healthcare provider-patient relationship should not be underestimated. The results show that TPE fosters more open communication and strengthens mutual trust, which is crucial for the effective management of chronic diseases such as those encountered in hematology(19). This improvement in the healthcare provider-patient relationship itself can contribute to better treatment adherence and optimal clinical outcomes.

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#### 5. Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of TPE in hematology, while also underscoring the challenges faced by healthcare professionals in its implementation. The findings suggest that better resource allocation, continuing education for healthcare providers, and the adaptation of TPE programs to the individual needs of patients are essential to improving the effectiveness of TPE. By overcoming these barriers, it is possible to strengthen the role of TPE in the management of hematological diseases, with significant benefits for both patients and healthcare professionals.

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#### Compliance with ethical standards

##### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

##### *Statement of ethical approval*

The research protocol was approved by an ethics committee

##### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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