

Abstract

Background: Severe asthma is often accompanied by multiple comorbidities, which may be treated by additional health care professionals (HCPs). This study investigates whether and to what extent patients with severe uncontrolled asthma were treated by and referred to other HCPs, after multidisciplinary assessment in a specialized severe asthma clinic.

Methods: This retrospective observational study assessed 54 patients with severe, uncontrolled asthma from a dedicated hospital in the Netherlands, who were referred for multidisciplinary pulmonary rehabilitation at altitude (AACT) in 2022-2024.

Results: Our study population consisted of 81% females, mean(SD) age 45(13) years, 67% had early onset and 57% allergic asthma. At baseline, 82% of patients were treated by a specialized nurse, 47% of patients by a physiotherapist, 15% by a health psychologist, 5% by a dietitian, 5% by a social worker. No patients received treatment from a speech therapist or occupational therapist. Multidisciplinary assessment led to additional referrals to various HCPs, but after several months only 44% of referrals resulted in actual appointments. Referrals vs actual appointments were 5% vs 0% for specialized nurse, 24% vs 60% for respiratory physiotherapist, 45% vs 54% for health psychologist, 4% vs 0% for dietitian, 18% vs 22% for social worker, 18% vs 30% for speech therapist, 22% vs 40% for occupational therapist.

Discussion: This is the first observational study that systematically investigates referral success rate after multidisciplinary pulmonary rehabilitation at altitude in severe asthma. Even though many referrals are made, only 44% actually lead to a first appointment. Future studies should focus more in depth on the reasons for this lack of care continuity.