

# Research aims to drag asthma management into the 21st century

May 2 2017

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A new study by University of Manchester researchers, published today - World Asthma Day - has probed the features that both patients and healthcare professionals want from an asthma management app.

Asthma treatment is currently managed by the use of written plans which help [patients](#) work out when to take their medication or seek advice. However, only a quarter of patients receive this and those that do often find it hard to stick to. To compensate, more than 200 [smartphone apps](#) have been developed, but these are often not informed by patient or professional needs.

The National Review of Asthma Deaths in 2014 concluded that two-thirds of asthma deaths were preventable.

The new study from The University of Manchester team incorporates focus group responses and written questionnaires from 183 patients and 63 professionals and has evaluated the features that they both find most useful to help inform future designs for apps.

One of the main functions that patients wanted from a mobile healthcare or 'mHealth' app was information on environmental conditions – such as pollen or pollution. They also wanted to be able to collect data that they could show their doctors. Professionals wanted apps to alert patients about when to receive medical help and to monitor adherence to their medication.

The latest study, published in the *European Respiratory Journal*, is part of a long-term, EU funded project called myAirCoach, to develop a useful and accessible mHealth device.

Lead researcher Dr Andrew Simpson, from The University of Manchester, said: "While smartphones have great potential for helping people manage their health, there has been such an explosion of different apps and devices that patients and professionals don't know what works best or if the design is up to the job.

"The idea of myAirCoach is to carefully work with these groups to find the best design and range of functions which help people manage their asthma."

With more than 300 million world-wide and 5.4 million in the UK affected by it, asthma is ideal for an mHealth approach. If a device or app can be created which is useful for both patients and healthcare professionals it has the potential to save lives, reduce hospital admissions and reduce the use of rescue medication.

The findings support the recommendations of a 2016 Asthma UK report, 'Connected asthma: how technology will transform care' which the research team contributed to, that called for asthma to be 'a focus and an exemplar for investment in technology-enabled self-management and clinician-led management in primary care'.

Dr Simpson concluded: "Although patients and [health care professionals](#) we asked had differing priorities, there was overwhelming support for the creation of evidence-based mHealth to support [asthma](#) management. The challenge is now to find the right design and technology to make this a reality."

**More information:** 'Perspectives of patients and healthcare

professionals on mHealth for asthma self-management.' *Asthma*.

myAirCoach: [www.myaircoach.eu/myaircoach/c ... t-myaircoach-project](http://www.myaircoach.eu/myaircoach/c...t-myaircoach-project)

Provided by University of Manchester

Citation: Research aims to drag asthma management into the 21st century (2017, May 2)  
retrieved 8 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-05-aims-asthma-21st-century.html>

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