

Abstract ID: TPS6624

Clinical trial register number: Vfd\_PACOCT\_12\_003487

## Background

Oral agents are increasingly prescribed in cancer therapy. They are characterized by a considerable potential for side effects, toxicity and drug interactions. Inadequate use of medication leads to ineffectiveness and, in some cases, may contribute to an early breakup. Subsequently, patients need a high level of self-management competence for coping with their oral cancer therapy. This raises the question how to communicate the required skills for patients competence, in particular to older patients with multiple diseases and to their supporting relatives.

Moreover, it seems necessary that outpatient oncology care needs to intervene more in private life of patients in order to ensure appropriate behavior with their oral medication.

Based on experiences from other diseases - for example diabetes - the deepen involvement of non-medical staff (especially oncology nurses) in patient education is a groundbreaking approach to improve patients' competence.

Individual interventions on a single level are not sufficient for sustainable effects. The promotion of patients' competence can only be successful as an intervention in a complex system.

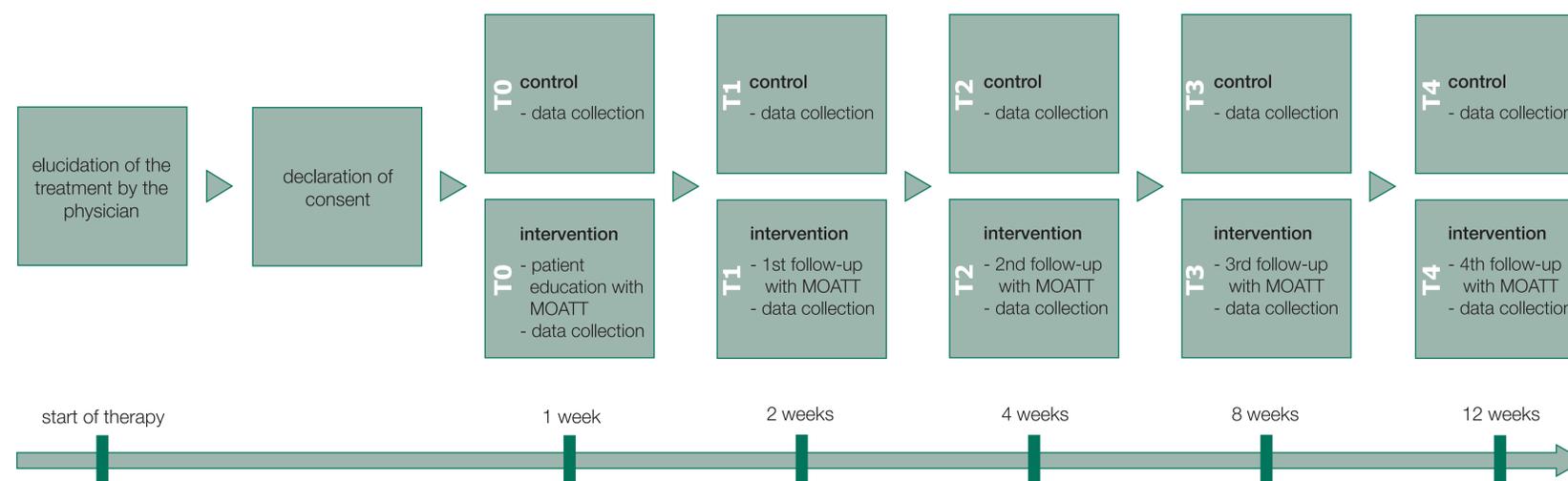
Patients' competence is a crucial challenge of modern cancer therapy which has not yet been studied systematically.

## Intervention

We evaluated whether a standardized recurring patient education program conducted by oncology nurses using MOATT (MASCC Oral Agent Teaching Tool) influences the patients' competence regarding therapy adherence, self-management ability, and eventually therapeutic success. Furthermore, the clarification of feasibility and of conditions to promote nurses involvement in patient counseling and education in oral cancer care were assessed.

The trial took part in 28 office-based oncology practices. Oncology nurses for the intervention group were specially trained for the education program in techniques of motivational communication and the knowledge of using oral agents. The intervention (n = 17 practices, 136 patients) was conducted in addition to the therapy counseling by the oncologist. The control group (n = 11 practices, 59 patients) received only the oncologists counseling. The MASCC Oral Agent Teaching Tool (MOATT) was developed by the MASCC Education Study Group. The MOATT aims to help healthcare providers in order to educate cancer patients receiving oral agents. The standardized tool addresses all key aspects of patient assessments and teaching and can be modified to meet individual needs. ([www.mascc.org/MOATT](http://www.mascc.org/MOATT))

The study addresses patients who were on an oral cancer therapy for the first time. A simultaneous intravenous chemotherapy was not allowed. The eligibility of patients started with elucidation of the treatment by the physician. The patient education with the MOATT was conducted before the oral therapy started and was recurred at 4 timepoints.



## Methods

A cluster randomized controlled interventional cohort study with two arms was conducted in office-based hematology and oncology practices in Germany (17 intervention practices / 11 control practices).

Primary endpoint was the patients' competence measured by a combination of self-efficacy, quality of life and therapy-related knowledge.

Secondary endpoints were side effects, health-related stress, overall dose, break up and interruption rate. The data was collected via paper based questionnaires, patient diaries, nursing documentation and abstracts from medical charts.

## Particular interest

Trained patients, who obtain an additional structured training and therapy support by (oncology) nurses:

- have better health-related quality of life, self-efficacy and therapy-related knowledge,
- have a higher adherence and a lower treatment drop-out and interruption rate,
- have less and announce less side effects, interactions and health-related stress,

than patients who solely receive counseling by the oncologist.

A standardized and sustained training and support of oral therapy patients by (oncology) nurses improve self-efficacy expectations of cancer patients regarding their own ability to manage and shape actively the oral cancer therapy.

## Current enrollment

The study was conducted from March until December 2014 in 28 office-based oncology practices. The analysis of the data is still ongoing and will be finished in July 2015.

## Acknowledgements

The study "Patients' Competence in Oral Cancer Therapy" (PACOCT) is promoted by the German Federal Ministry of Health and embedded in the German National Cancer Plan. The study would not be possible without the support of many office-based hematologists and oncologists, esp. the focus group (Dr. Welslau, Dr. Dengler, Dr. Heymanns, Dr. Böck, Dr. Steinmetz, Dr. Schauer, Dr. Overkamp).



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