Definition, categorization & terminology of Episodic Breathlessness: Consensus by an International Delphi Panel

Study group:
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What are we actually talking about?

episodes of breathlessness
attacks of breathlessness
breakthrough dyspnea
Intermittent breathlessness
dyspnea crisis
exertional dyspnoea
What we already know about episodic breathlessness

➢ similarities to breakthrough pain
  (e.g. high severity, short duration)
➢ independent of continuous breathlessness

& what is missing:

➢ limited management options
➢ not yet clearly defined internationally & diversity of terms

understanding
clinical research
effective management

Davies et al. 2009&2011, Reddy et al 2009,
Aim of the study

to reach international consensus on a definition, categorisation & terminology of episodic breathlessness

Methods: web-based Delphi survey

- multi-professional experts in the field of breathlessness
- preliminary draft suggested based on previous work
- structured online survey (5-point Likert), 1st round open-ended
- consensus defined in advance as ≥70% agreement

Simon et al. 2012&2013
Results

- Consensus was reached after three Delphi rounds
- Participants
  - clinicians & researchers: medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, psychology
  - aged 20-79, 60% m, from USA, Canada, Europe, Australia

1st round
n=31 (46 %)

2nd round
n=29 (43 %)
Categorization (96.3%)
Terminology (92.9%)

3rd round
n=33 (50 %)
Definition (84.4%)
‘Episodic’ breathlessness is one form of breathlessness characterized by a severe worsening of breathlessness intensity or unpleasantness beyond usual fluctuations in the patient's perception. Episodes are time-limited (seconds to hours) and occur intermittently, with or without underlying continuous breathlessness. Episodes may be predictable or unpredictable, depending on whether any trigger(s) can be identified. There is a range of known triggers which can interact (e.g. exertion, emotions, comorbidities or external environment). One episode can be caused by one or more trigger(s).
Categorisation (96.3 %)

Episodic Breathlessness

I) Predictable

II) Unpredictable

Types of known triggers:
1. Exertion (e.g. walking, talking)
2. Emotions (e.g. panic, anger)
3. Comorbidities (e.g. infection, fever)
4. External environment (e.g. dust, temperature)
Take home!

Breathlessness - episodic vs. continuous?

- predictable vs. unpredictable?

- helps to find adequate management strategies
  - onset of current medication (IRM) > duration of episodes
  - chose options according to trigger(s)

- definition & categorisation serve as a catalyst for research

Simon et al. 2012; Weingärtner et al. 2013
… as a catalyst for clinical & basic research

(Which) non-pharmacological treatment efficient?

Are fast acting drugs efficient?

What are the patient relevant therapeutic targets?

Adequate outcome (measures)?
Thank you very much for your time!

Any questions?

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References


