

General practitioners in Styria - what research ideas do they have and how do they rate the ideas of others? Medical University of Graz, Austria

S. Poggenburg¹; K.Horvath¹; M.Orso¹; R. Höfler¹; U. Spary-Kainz¹; A. Siebenhofer^{1,2}

¹Institute of General Practice and Evidence-based Health Services Research (IAMEV), Medical University of Graz, Austria

²Institute of General Practice, Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Background: The Institute of General Practice and Evidence-based Health Services Research (IAMEV) surveyed all 1015 Styrian general practitioners (GPs), and asked them what motivated them to participate in research projects, and to formulate their own research questions.

Study Question: What research ideas do GPs have? Which of them could be used as a basis for specific research questions? How do Styrian GPs evaluate research questions suggested by their colleagues in terms of relevance to their own practice?

Methodology: The GPs' 133 research ideas were divided into two categories - "general research topics" (105) and "research questions" (28). An expert panel reviewed research questions in terms of their feasibility and relevance. In order to structure them according to the PICO-scheme, 17 were selected and reformulated based on semi-structured telephone interviews with the GPs that suggested them. The expert panel prioritized the items in the question pool according to relevance and feasibility, and selected 10 research questions. All 1015 Styrian GPs were sent the questions and asked to evaluate them in terms of relevance to their own practice (rating scale: 1-4).

Figure 1: Development of the study

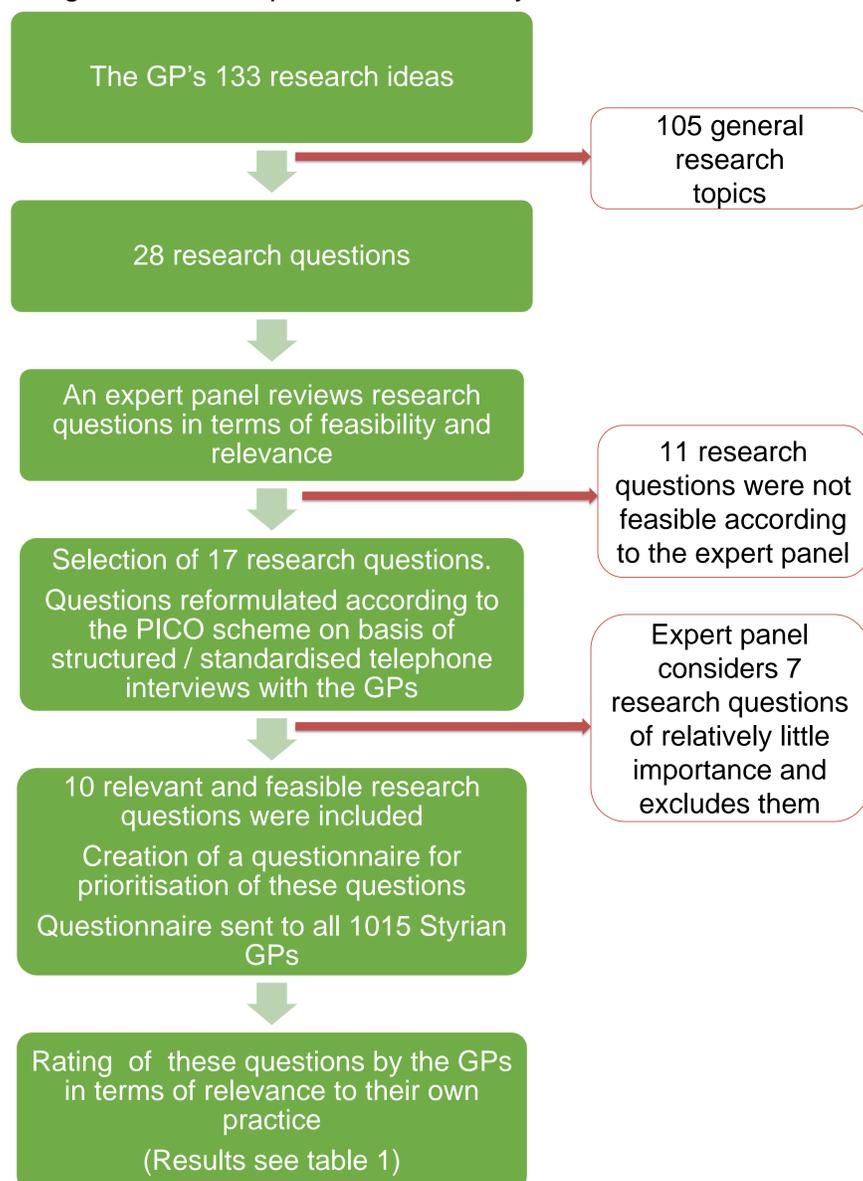


Table 1: The 10 research questions considered most relevant by the GPs

Evaluation of the relevance of research questions by the GPs (shown in order of relevance)
How sensible is a gatekeeping system (GP is the obligatory first point of contact for patients) in comparison to a system with free choice of specialists?
Compared to pain treatment with NSARs, do active therapeutic exercises lower the level of sick leave among patients with low back pain?
Which results does the holistic approach of the GPs have, relating to unspecific discomfort like tiredness and exhaustion in comparison to the immediate diagnosis in an outpatient department?
Compared to hospital outpatient clinics, is the GP better and faster at making a diagnosis and initiating treatment for somatoform disorders in young women?
What are the recommendations to optimize benefits and harms of statin therapy for secondary prevention in patients over 80 years?
Are popular household remedies as effective in the treatment of viral respiratory infections as therapies with NSARs and mucolytics?
How do young persons' and young adults' expectations of family doctors and specialists differ?
Does the supervision and optimization of food intake lower the frequency of falls and their implications in older patients?
Is the treatment of uncomplicated bowel inflammations in children with self-made electrolyte solutions as effective as probiotic therapies?
Do patients with an idiopathic increase in blood sedimentation run a higher risk of developing chronic inflammatory diseases, haematological disorders and other malignant illnesses?

Results: The response rate to the 1015 questionnaires was 14.7% (n=149). The GPs rated the question on the gatekeeping system as the most relevant to their practice. Other research questions they considered relevant mostly concerned diseases commonly encountered by GPs.

Discussion: While several studies exist on what motivates GPs to participate in healthcare research projects, few attempt to determine the relevance of specific research questions to GPs. Involving GPs in determining the content of these projects may encourage them to participate in them.

