BMJ Open

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Journal:	*BMJ Open*
Manuscript ID	bmjopen-2024-087610
Article Type:	Original research
Date Submitted by the Author:	16-Apr-2024
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Keywords:	China, Cognition, Cross-Sectional Studies, Education, Medical, Rehabilitation medicine < INTERNAL MEDICINE

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Knowledge, attitude, and practice of Chinese medical staff in early pulmonary rehabilitation during acute exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease: A cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Objective: To investigate the knowledge, attitude and practice of early PR of AECOPD among Chinese medical staff and the relationship between them.

Design: A multi-center cross-sectional survey was used in this study.

Settings: The study was conducted at several hospitals in Guizhou Province, China.

Primary and secondary outcome measures : A 41-item questionnaire was used to collect the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the KAP of the medical staff on the early PR of AECOPD.

Participants:A total of 745 medical workers were recruited from several hospitals in Guizhou province by convenient sampling method.

Methods: Cross-sectional design and web-based questionnaire survey were used to collect data.Medical staff from a number of hospitals in Guizhou Province, China were recruited by means of convenience sampling.A total of 745 medical personnel were involved. SPSS software version 27 was used for descriptive analysis, independent t test, variance analysis and multiple linear regression analysis of the data.

Results: A total of 745 health care workers participated in the study. The KAP scores of knowledge, attitude and behavior were 68%, 71% and 75%, respectively. The medical staff have higher cognition degree of pulmonary rehabilitation, positive attitude and good practice. There is a positive correlation between knowledge, attitude and practice.

Conclusion: This study found that knowledge and attitude affect the perceived behavior of

medical staff, experience and education affect knowledge level; It is recommended that organizations work towards education and training to support the knowledge of medical personnel and instill positive attitudes in them, especially in fostering a positive culture to improve practice.

KEYWORDS: knowledge, attitude, practice, early pulmonary rehabilitation (PR), Acute exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (AECOPD), China

This study is the first of its kind in China to investigate the knowledge, attitude and practice of medical staff on pulmonary rehabilitation.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

A large number of medical personnel living in Guizhou were included, and nurses accounted for the highest proportion.

This study was only conducted in Guizhou Province, China, and the proportion of nurses was high, which affected the universality of the findings.

All of the data was self-reported by medical staff, which can create inherent bias.

As with all other cross-sectional studies, the data collection methods in this study capture a single moment, limiting the ability to make causal inferences.

Despite these limitations, this study highlights important findings about the knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of medical personnel.

INTRUDUCTION

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a prevalent and progressive respiratory ailment characterized by persistent airflow obstruction and respiratory symptoms[1, 2]. Despite its heterogeneity, COPD is primarily caused by the inhalation of particulate matter, including cigarette smoke and air pollutants, in addition to genetic, developmental, and social factors.

Furthermore, COPD frequently presents with acute exacerbations, which necessitate additional treatment and pose a significant public health concern in contemporary society[2–4].

Acute exacerbations are a frequent occurrence among individuals diagnosed with COPD[5], commonly referred to as AECOPD, have the potential to be severe, leading to hospitalizations and significant healthcare expenditures[5, 6]. These exacerbations are a characteristic aspect of the disease and contribute significantly to both morbidity and mortality rates[1, 7]. AECOPD have detrimental effects on patients' overall health and disease progression, rendering them more susceptible to subsequent exacerbations, hospitalizations, and even death. Consequently, the primary objective of treatment for patients experiencing AECOPD is to mitigate the adverse consequences associated with these events and prevent their recurrence[8, 9].These exacerbations can also result in further deterioration of quality of life, lung function, and functional status, while simultaneously increasing the likelihood of subsequent hospitalization and premature mortality. AECOPD, defined as an acute event marked by symptom exacerbation necessitating medication adjustment, may expedite disease progression and heighten the susceptibility to hospital admissions and mortality, in addition to diminishing overall quality of life[10, 11].

According to a statement from the American Thoracic Society (ATS) and the European Respiratory Society, Pulmonary Rehabilitation (PR) is a comprehensive non-pharmacological treatment that holds the highest potential for enhancing symptoms of COPD[10]. PR serves as a fundamental intervention in the management of patients with stable COPD, encompassing exercise training, education, and behavioral modifications[12, 13]. While PR programs are predominantly offered to stable patients or post-discharge, there is a scarcity of training programs tailored to acute exacerbations during hospitalization[10].There exists a substantial body of evidence

that substantiates the advantages of PR subsequent to hospitalization for AECOPD, encompassing enhanced exercise capacity and health-related quality of life, as well as diminished readmissions and mortality rates[14]. Nevertheless, the rates of referral and acceptance for PR remain disappointingly low. Prior data has demonstrated that a mere 30% of eligible patients are referred for PR following hospitalization, with less than 10% successfully completing the program. The obstacles impeding referral and acceptance are intricate and multifaceted in nature[10].

The objective of this study was to examine the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of Chinese medical personnel regarding early PR with AECOPD, as well as to establish the correlation between their knowledge, attitudes, and practices in relation to early PR. This exploration of data on medical personnel's knowledge, attitudes, and practices and their interrelationships can yield valuable insights for enhancing quality.Researchers have indicated that knowledge has a positive impact on a person's attitude, which in turn affects practice or behavior[15], based on which we assumed that the knowledge of medical personnel in PR is directly or indirectly related to practice through attitude.

METHODS

Design and setting

This study employed a multi-center cross-sectional survey to investigate medical staff in various hospitals in Guizhou Province, China, from July to October 2023, utilizing an online questionnaire. The study was guided by the behavioral theory referred to as "Knowledge-Attitude-Belief Practice (KABP)"[16].All medical personnel employed in the various hospitals from which data were gathered were deemed eligible for participation through convenience sampling. In order to be included in the study, these eligible individuals were

required to meet two specific criteria: (a) they had to be currently employed in the hospitals for a minimum duration of one year, and (b) they had to possess a Practice Certificate issued by the Ministry of Health of China.All participants willingly participated in the study, while medical personnel who did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded from the study due to the unavailability of an informed consent form[17]. The completion of the questionnaire signifies consent, resulting in a total sample size of 745 instances. To ensure the questionnaire data's quality and validity, each item is designated as a compulsory question, and only the initial response's valid data is chosen based on the IP address and answer time, thereby preventing multiple submissions from a single device. Individuals with a score rate exceeding 85% are classified as excellent, those falling within the 60%-85% range are considered good, while scores below 60% are categorized as poor.

The questionnaires

A structured self-report questionnaire was developed with the purpose of assessing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of medical personnel in relation to early PR for AECOPD. Our decision to employ a self-designed questionnaire encompassing professional knowledge, precautions, and operational techniques of PR is believed to provide valuable guidance to medical staff in facilitating patients' engagement in early PR. The questionnaire design was implemented in two distinct stages During the initial phase, the research team undertook a comprehensive literature review to develop an initial questionnaire, which was subsequently refined through consultations with experts. In the subsequent stage, the revised document will be subjected to expert scrutiny, ultimately leading to the creation of the final questionnaire. The questionnaire encompassed three distinct dimensions, namely knowledge (comprising 19 items), attitude

(comprising 11 items), and practice (comprising 11 items).The knowledge dimension of this study primarily focused on the definition, main contents, curative effect, contraindications, implementation period, and principles of PR. Participants were asked to rate their level of understanding on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Very little" to "Very well". The attitude dimension, on the other hand, assessed participants' perceptions of the impact of PR, role perception, and management of AECOPD in clinical practice. This dimension also utilized a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". Similarly, the practice dimension was evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Very much out of line" to "Fit very well".To mitigate the risk of subjects completing the questionnaire in a careless manner and to minimize the occurrence of invalid responses, we employed a strategy of incorporating reverse questions within the first five items of the attitude dimension. The content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by a panel of 16 local experts who fulfilled the following criteria: (1) possessing expertise in critical care, nursing management, nursing research, respiratory specialist nursing, or respiratory department; (2) holding academic titles of associate chief senior nurse/doctor, associate professor, or higher; and (3) affiliated with tertiary hospitals or medical colleges.Following two rounds of expert reviews and subsequent modifications, the Cronbach's α coefficient and KMO value of the final PR scale were determined to be 0.953 and 0.969, respectively. Overall, the questionnaire exhibited acceptable levels of validity and reliability within the context of this study.

Data collection and ethical considerations

It is important to note that participation in the study was entirely voluntary. To gather data, web-based questionnaires were employed, with the design and creation of the questionnaire link

being entrusted to Questionnaire Star (Changsha Ranxing Information Technology Co. Ltd).Data will be gathered via the facilitation of a WeChat group. Upon completion of the questionnaire, respondents are required to click the "Submit" button to save their responses. In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, no personal information pertaining to medical personnel will be collected. Furthermore, participants will not receive any financial remuneration upon completion of the questionnaire.

Data analysis

The statistical analyses in this study were conducted using IBM SPSS 27.0 for Windows. To assess the normality of numerical variables, the Shapiro-Wilk test was employed. Descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage, were utilized to describe the sample. Descriptive information was presented as n(%) or mean ± standard deviation. The calculation of score percentages for both overall and individual dimensions involved dividing the average score by the theoretical maximum and multiplying by 100%. Certain continuous variables, such as age and number of years of hospitalization experience, were categorized into distinct groups for analysis. In order to examine the disparities between the scale and demographic information, we employed an independent sample t-test and a one-way ANOVA. In the case of the t-test, if both samples meet the assumption of equal variance, the t-test of equal variance is utilized. Conversely, if the variances are unequal, a t-test for unequal variances is employed.The Tukey test was employed to conduct group comparisons. The examination of the association between knowledge, attitude, and practice entailed the utilization of Pearson correlation coefficients. Multiple linear regression was utilized to investigate the factors that impact knowledge, attitudes, and practices. A bilateral significance test was conducted for all analyses, with a significance level set at 0.05.

RESULTS

Sociodemographic characteristics of participants

A total of 753 medical personnel completed the questionnaire, 745 valid questionnaires, the response rate was 98.9%. The majority of participants were female (680, 91.3%) and predominantly occupied nursing roles (684, 91.8%). Among the respondents, 409 primarily worked in the intensive care department of tertiary hospitals, while the remaining 334 were affiliated with secondary hospitals, accounting for 44.8% of the sample. Furthermore, a significant proportion of participants held a bachelor's degree or higher (566, 76%). Approximately 43.9% of the participants had undergone early pulmonary rehabilitation training for AECOPD, while a similar proportion (42.7%) had practical experience in AECOPD early PR work. Further comprehensive details regarding the sociodemographic and professional characteristics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Sociodemographic characteristics.

Socio-demographic variables	n(%)
Gender	
Male	65(8.7)
Female	680(91.3)
Age	
20 to 29	352 (47.2)
30 to 39	329 (44.2)
Above 40	64 (8.6)
Education	
Postgraduate or above	5(0.7)
Bachelor degree	561(75.3)
Three-year college education	174(23.4)
Secondary vocational school education	5(0.7)
Occupation	
Doctor	61(8.2)
Nurse	684(91.8)
Years of working	
1 to 5	221(41.9)

5 to 9	254(31.9)
Above 10	270(26.2)
The title of a professional post	
junior professional title	462(62.0)
medium-grade professional title	251(33.7)
Associate senior title	26(3.5)
high professional title	6(3.5)
Hospital level	
tertiary hospitals	334(44.8)
second-class hospital	409(54.9)
Class-I hospital	2(0.3)
Receive training	
Yes	327(43.9)
no	418(56.1)
Work experience	
Yes	318(42.7)
no	417(57.3)

The level of knowledge, attitude and practice of medical staff towards AECOPD pulmonary rehabilitation

The average knowledge score was 64.49±17.24, corresponding to a scoring rate of approximately 68%. Likewise, the average attitude score was 42.81±5.95, indicating a scoring rate of around 71%. Furthermore, the average attitude score was 41.39±8.97, with a scoring rate of about 75%. Detailed analysis results for each dimension are provided in Table 2.

Effects of demographic and job-related variables on health care workers' knowledge, attitudes, and perceived practice toward pulmonary rehabilitation for AECOPD

Knowledge

The findings from the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) presented in Table 1 indicate significant variations in knowledge scores across various departments. Additionally, significant differences in knowledge scores were observed when comparing different frequencies of contact with patients. However, no significant relationship was found between age, education level,

working time, professional title, hospital level, position, and knowledge.Based on the results of the independent-sample t-test, significant variations in knowledge scores were identified among distinct categories, including gender, occupation, presence of work experience in early PR of AECOPD, participation in training related to early PR of AECOPD, familiarity with relevant knowledge, and employment as respiratory department staff.Based on the findings of Tukey's test, it was observed that knowledge scores in various departments such as stomatology, gynecology, ENT, among others, exhibited significant disparities when compared to the scores in emergency, internal medicine, and ICU. Furthermore, variations in knowledge scores were also evident across different levels of patient interaction, specifically within the ranges of 0-9%, 10%-29%, and ≥30%.

Attitude

Based on the findings from the independent-sample t-test and one-way ANOVA analysis, significant statistical disparities were observed across various demographic variables, including gender, age, occupation, years of work, title, position, hospital level, experience in AECOPD PR work, familiarity with AECOPD PR knowledge, department affiliation, and respiratory staff status.Based on the findings of Tukey's test, a notable disparity in attitude scores was observed between individuals aged 20-29 and those aged ≥40. Furthermore, significant variations were identified in the scores of individuals with work experience of ≥10 years compared to those with work experience of 5-9 years and ≤5 years.

Practice

The results of the independent-sample t-test indicated significant relationships between occupation, participation in AECOPD PR training, relevant work experience, knowledge, and

being a respiratory staff member with practice. However, the one-way ANOVA analysis revealed that only the department of the subjects and the frequency of patient contact were significantly associated with practice, while the other variables did not demonstrate statistical significance.Based on the findings of Tukey's test, a statistically significant disparity was observed in the practice scores among patients with varying frequencies of contact, specifically those scoring between 10 to 29 percent, ≥30 percent, and 0-9 percent.

Table 2

The knowledge, attitude, practice score

Variables	Knowledges		Attitudes		Practices	
	Mean±SD	Test results	Mean±SD	Test results	Mean±SD	Test results
Gender						
Male	70.49±15.97	*t'*=3.146	40.94±7.11	*t'*=-2.251	42.94±8.02	*t*=1.454
Female	63.92±17.26	*P*=0.002	42.99±5.80	*P*=0.027	41.25±9.05	*P*=0.146
Age						
20 to 29	64.82±15.98	*F*=0.121	42.14±5.80	*F*=5.164	41.05±8.49	*F*=0.620
30 to 39	64.22±18.28	*P*=0.886	43.24±5.93	*P*=0.006	41.60±9.40	*P*=0.538
Above 40	64.11±18.68		44.30±6.46		42.23±9.40	
Education						
Postgraduate or above	81.80±10.94	*F*=1.754	42.60±4.98	*F*=0.715	41.20±7.73	*F*=0.608
Bachelor degree	64.51±17.54	*P*=0.155	42.97±6.08	*P*=0.543	41.64±9.05	*P*=0.610
Three-year college education	63.93±16.17		42.35±5.53		40.65±8.76	
Secondary vocational school education	65.60±20.66		40.60±5.37		39.60±9.92	
Occupation						
Doctor	73.90±15.72	*t'*=4.814	44.28±9.41	*t*=2.631	39.36±6.65	*t*=-4.794
Nurse	63.65±17.13	*P*＜0.001	41.14±8.90	*P*=0.009	43.12±5.80	*p*＜0.001
Years of working						
1 to 5	65.92±15.39	*F*=1.177	42.33±5.84	*F*=7.063	41.03±8.23	*F*=2.764
5 to 9	63.54±17.59	*P*=0.309	42.09±5.90	*p*＜0.001	40.65±8.90	*P*=0.064
Above 10	64.23±18.31		43.88±5.95		42.40±9.57	
The title of a professional post						
Junior professional title	64.50±16.75	*F*=1.396	42.12±5.74	*F*=5.78	40.98±8.65	*F*=0.930
Medium-grade professional title	65.18±17.72	*P*=0.243	44.04±6.19	*p*＜0.001	42.15±9.40	*P*=0.426

Associate senior title	57.92±20.71		42.96±5.67		41.46±10.52	
High professional title	64.00±16.96		43.17±5.31		41.50±8.19	
Hospital level						
Tertiary hospitals	64.94±17.09	*F*=0.267	43.36±6.15	*F*=3.131	41.10±9.26	*F*=0.614
Second-class hospital	64.11±17.32	*P*=0.766	42.38±5.75	*P*=0.044	41.61±8.74	*P*=0.541
Class-I hospital	68.50±36.06		38.00±2.83		46.50±12.02	
Receive training						
Yes	73.72±12.76	*t'*=15.162	43.29±6.46	*t'*=1.912	43.84±8.41	*t'*=6.803
no	57.27±16.86	*p*＜0.001	42.43±5.49	*P*=0.056	9.48±8.95	*p*＜0.001
Work experience						
Yes	74.03±12.35	*t'*=15.488	43.47±6.54	*t'*=2.544	44.15±8.27	*t'*=7.586
no	57.40±16.96	*p*＜0.001	42.32±5.42	*P*=0.011	39.34±8.94	*p*＜0.001
Understand relevant knowledge						
Yes	73.10±12.81	*t'*=18.500	43.33±6.54	*t'*=2.876	43.82±8.42	*t*=8.902
no	53.19±15.75	*p*＜0.001	42.12±5.00	*P*=0.04	38.20±8.70	*p*＜0.001
Hospital position						
General staff	64.48±17.11	*F*=0.118	42.56±5.89	*F*=7.021	41.40±8.88	*F*=1.554
Head nurse	64.24±19.35	*P*=0.889	45.56±6.06	*P*＜0.001	40.53±9.96	*P*=0.212
Head of department	67.38±14.85		44.75±5.20		46.50±9.34	
Department						
Internal medicine	68.72±16.10	*F*=22.752	43.32±6.36	*F*=2.429	42.57±8.70	*F*=4.810
Department of surgery	58.01±16.86	*p*＜0.001	41.57±5.19	*P*=0.046	39.60±9.31	*p*＜0.001
Emergency treatment	65.11±15.86		42.34±5.04		41.63±7.99	
Intensive care unit	70.53±12.01		43.34±6.42		41.91±7.31	
Other	55.94±17.73		42.36±5.26		39.39±9.71	
Respiratory staff						
Yes	73.42±13.64	*t'*=12.664	43.84±6.92	*t'*=3.468	43.60±8.52	*t*=5.330
no	59.09±16.96	*p*＜0.001	42.18±5.18	*p*＜0.001	40.05±8.99	*p*＜0.001
Patient contact frequency						
0 to 9%	52.70±17.65	*F*=83.310	42.12±5.23	*F*=1.536	37.92±9.33	*F*=19.301
10% to 29%	62.88±16.33	*p*＜0.001	42.96±5.77	*P*=0.216	41.63±8.71	*p*＜0.001
Above 30%	71.10±14.05		43.05±6.35		42.93±8.51	

t', t-tests for unequal variances.

Correlation study of knowledge, attitude and behavior of medical staff on PR in patients with AECOPD

The findings of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 3, indicating a notable and positive correlation between knowledge and attitudes (R = 0.491, P < 0.001). As the knowledge score increased, there was a corresponding elevation in attitude scores. Additionally, a significant

and evident correlation between knowledge and practice was observed, with a statistically significant relationship ($R = 0.129$, $P < 0.001$). Furthermore, a strong correlation between attitude and practice was clearly evident ($R = 0.246$, $P < 0.001$).

Table 3
Correlation of knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to early PR from AECOPD of medical staff.

	Scores of knowledge	Scores of attitude	Scores of practice
Scores of knowledge			
Pearson Correlation	1	0.491**	0.129**
Sig.		0.000	0.000
N	745	745	745
Scores of attitudes			
Pearson Correlation	.491**	1	0.246**
Sig.	0.000		0.000
N	745	745	745
Scores of practices			
Pearson Correlation	0.129**	0.246**	1
Sig.	0.000	0.000	
N	745	745	745

Results of several linear regression equations

Statistically significant variables in univariate analyses were added to multivariate linear stepwise regression. An analysis was conducted employing multiple linear regression equations to explore the independent associations between knowledge, attitudes, and practices scores. The findings from the Multiple linear regression model (Table 4) revealed significant associations between knowledge and variables such as training received, AECOPD early PR work experience, familiarity with relevant knowledge, occupation as respiratory staff, and frequency of patient contact.After accounting for other variables, the analysis presented in Table 5 demonstrates that gender, hospital level, professional title, and various positions within the respiratory staff are independent factors that significantly impact attitudes. Furthermore, the presence of prior AECOPD early PR work experience, knowledge pertaining to the subject matter, and frequency of

contact with AECOPD patients were identified as independent factors influencing practice scores, as indicated in Table 6.

Supplemental Table1

Supplemental Table2

Supplemental Table3

DISCUSSION

AECOPD have been found to have a substantial negative impact on quality of life and an elevated risk of mortality[18]. Existing guidelines strongly advocate for the implementation of early PR following a severe exacerbation[12]. Recent research has additionally demonstrated the advantages of early PR during hospitalization for the management of AECOPD, highlighting its safety and reliability[5, 19].The objective of this study was to evaluate the level of knowledge, attitude, and behavior among medical personnel regarding early PR for AECOPD. Our findings indicate that medical staff in the Guizhou region of China demonstrate promising knowledge, attitude, and practice towards early PR for AECOPD. However, there is a need for improvement in the knowledge, attitude, and practice of nurses in this area. Additionally, Our study revealed a significant correlation between knowledge, attitude, and practice scores for early PR in AECOPD.This finding aligns with previous research, indicating the necessity for further enhancement of PR education programs within our nation[19]. Additionally, it is evident that a majority of medical professionals, particularly nurses, possess a general comprehension of the field of PR, yet their knowledge lacks depth and comprehensiveness.However, Chinese scholars are actively endeavoring to address this phenomenon. Presently, studies pertaining to the PR management mode, spearheaded by respiratory specialist nurses, demonstrate the noteworthy

long-term impact of multi-specialist group collaboration in PR led by specialist nurses[20–22]. This not only influences patient prognosis but also holds immense significance for the advancement of Chinese medical personnel in the realm of PR.

A thorough understanding and recognition of early pulmonary rehabilitation among healthcare professionals is imperative for attaining favorable outcomes in patients with AECOPD, as it serves as the foundation for adopting suitable attitudes and practices[23]. The present study revealed that the rate of knowledge pertaining to early PR was approximately 68%, with an average knowledge score of 64.49±17.24. These findings indicate a deficiency in the knowledge of medical personnel regarding early PR.Among the items assessed, pulmonary rehabilitation programs, prognostic and curative knowledge received the highest average scores, in that order. Conversely, the content of PR, the scale of assessment, and the related knowledge of the principles followed obtained the lowest average scores. These findings indicate that while medical staff possess a general understanding of early PR, their knowledge lacks comprehensiveness and depth. Currently, the most recent research demonstrates the efficacy and safety of early PR treatment for AECOPD[5, 24]. The field of medicine encompasses various components, including daily diagnosis, treatment, and health service support, all of which heavily rely on the involvement of nurses[25]. Consequently, the nursing workload is substantial and demanding. Particularly, due to factors such as limited nursing staff and the ratio of medical personnel, there is a scarcity of healthcare providers during rotation tasks, resulting in a primary focus on routine treatment and disease management[26]. The inability to promptly and comprehensively update the most recent knowledge and skills necessitates the need for further standardization of the rotation system for medical

personnel, scientific innovation in nursing scheduling methods, and rational establishment of the medical care ratio[27].

In the present study, the attitude dimension score rate among medical staff was approximately 71%, with an average score of 42.81±5.95. However, a mere 8.2% of the population achieved a scoring rate of no less than 85%, while 71.4% attained a scoring rate ranging from 60% to 85%. These findings indicate a predominantly positive inclination of medical staff towards early PR.Not exactly consistent with previous studies, the study conducted by Su Er Guo et al. revealed that a considerable percentage of nurses (86%) recognized the significance of PR in the care of individuals diagnosed with COPD[28]. Conversely, Johnston et al. (year) reported that 77% of healthcare professionals expressed a strong belief in the utmost importance of PR for COPD patients[29].The observed outcome may be attributed to variations in hospital level and specific departments. Findings from this investigation indicate a statistically significant elevation in the attitude score among medical personnel in tertiary hospitals compared to those in primary hospitals ($P = 0.044$). Furthermore, medical staff working in the respiratory department exhibited significantly higher attitude scores in comparison to their counterparts in other departments ($P < 0.001$). Previous research has demonstrated that the educational background of nursing staff with limited experience and junior positions in primary hospitals in China tends to be subpar[30].Currently, clinical nursing staff exhibit a low and heterogeneous level of scientific research proficiency. It is imperative for nursing managers to implement systematic training programs that enhance nurses' knowledge and practical skills in scientific research within the field of nursing[31, 32]. Evidently, substantial evidence supports the notion that knowledge significantly impacts attitudes[33].

In the present study, the practice dimension of medical staff yielded a score rate of approximately 75%, with an average score of 41.39±8.97. These findings suggest that the overall performance of medical staff in implementing PR is commendable. However, it should be noted that these results do not align entirely with the study conducted by Su Er Guo et al[28].Following extensive research, early PR for COPD has yielded significant outcomes, establishing its status as a secure and efficacious non-pharmacological intervention. Similarly, AECOPD early PR builds upon the advancements in COPD early pulmonary rehabilitation and is likewise acknowledged as a reliable and effective non-pharmacological treatment.Only 25.9% of the population achieved a scoring rate of no less than 85%, while 48.9% of the population achieved a scoring rate between 60% and 85%. Additionally, 12.9% of the population scored below 60%. Notably, the three areas with the lowest scores were the mastery of accident cause analysis, the ability to organize patients in learning relevant content, and the proficiency in assessment techniques.However, it is worth noting that a subset of medical personnel exhibited suboptimal scores, potentially attributable to the limited sample pool utilized in this study. A significant majority of the samples were derived from Level I and Level II hospitals, suggesting a plausible explanation for the lack of standardized training among a considerable portion of healthcare providers[34]. Consequently, the inability to deliver tailored and proficient treatment and care to patients undergoing PR may be a consequence of this deficiency.

Based on the theory of knowledge and belief, individuals have the potential to develop appropriate behaviors through the acquisition of pertinent knowledge and the cultivation of a positive attitude[35]. The findings of this study indicate significant positive associations between knowledge, attitude, and behavior ($P < 0.01$).This finding suggests that a higher level of PR

knowledge among medical personnel is associated with the ability to cultivate a positive attitude and enhance behavioral compliance. It is evident that a causal relationship exists between knowledge, belief, and action, aligning with the theoretical framework positing that knowledge influences attitude, which in turn drives behavior.The medical staff in the respiratory department assumes a crucial role as the primary executors of PR training for patients with AECOPD. Extensive research has demonstrated that a deeper understanding of pulmonary rehabilitation among medical staff correlates positively with their ability to enhance patients' motivation and adherence to the program[36, 37].

Through the utilization of multiple linear regression analysis, our study revealed a significant correlation between knowledge and various factors, including training, prior experience in AECOPD PR, comprehension of relevant knowledge, occupation as respiratory workers, and frequency of patient interaction. The findings of this study suggest that medical personnel who have received training in PR and possess work experience in this field demonstrate superior levels of knowledge and practice. These results indicate that practical experience in clinical settings can enhance one's understanding, abilities, and confidence in the context of PR, aligning with previous research findings[38].The findings of the survey conducted by Mahendran R et al. on PR among nurses indicate that participation in training courses and gaining clinical experience have the potential to enhance nurses' knowledge, attitude, and behavior[39].Engagement in PR training and relevant professional experience can enhance the knowledge and proficiency of healthcare personnel, thereby influencing the clinical advancement of PR.

CONCLUSION

AECOPD is not only a huge financial burden for healthcare organizations, but has been and will continue to be a threat to the safety of hospital patients. Agencies and medical staff need to act quickly to improve the situation. Therefore, it is particularly important to provide them with adequate clinical exposure dedicated exclusively to the practice of PR in order to enhance their professional competence. This study found that knowledge and attitude affect the perceived behavior of medical staff, experience and education affect the knowledge level; It is recommended that organizations strive for education and training to support the knowledge of medical staff and instill positive attitudes in them, especially in fostering a positive culture to improve practice.

Fundings

This research was supported by the National Natural Science Foundation (NSFC) Regional Fund Cultivation Program project of Affiliated Hospital of Guizhou Medical University (contract No. gyfynsfc[2023]-35) and the 2023 research project of Chinese Nursing Association (project No. ZHKYQ202316).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We thank all the medical staff who participated in our study. We are grateful to the nursing departments and medical records departments of several hospitals in Guizhou for their support in data collection.

Author Contributions

Tingrui Wang contributed to the data acquisition, data analysis, data interpretation, draft the article, revise important intellectual content of the article, and the final approval of the version to

be submitted.

Zhangyi Wang contributed to the work design, data collection, data acquisition, data analysis, data interpretation, draft the article, revise important intellectual content of the article, and the final approval of the version to be submitted.

Li Yao contributed to the work design, data collection, data acquisition, data analysis, data interpretation, draft the article, revise important intellectual content of the article, and the final approval of the version to be submitted.

Fangrong Jia, Yaling Li and Peng Cai contributed to the analysis of the work, data interpretation, draft the article, and the final approval of the version to be submitted.

Qinqin Li, Yan Liu and Tingshu Wang contributed to the analysis of the work, data interpretation, draft the article, and the final approval of the version to be submitted.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Research concept and design: WTR, WZY, YL;Data collection: WTR, YL, JFR, LYL, CP; Data analysis: WTR, YL, WZY, LQQ, LY, WTS; Drafting of the manuscript: WTR, YL, WZY; Critical revision of the manuscript: WTR, YL, WZY

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Table 4

The results of linear regression analysis to investigate the effect of demographic characteristics on medical staff's knowledge about early PR (N = 745).

Independent variables	*B* coefficient	Standard coefficient	*β*-value	Statistics	*P*-value
Constant	98.935	5.141		19.245	＜0.001
Receive training	-5.423	1.251	-0.156	-4.336	＜0.001
Work experience	-3.760	1.269	-0.108	-2.963	0.003
Understand relevant knowledge	-10.705	1.323	-0.308	-8.094	＜0.001
Respiratory staff	-4.273	1.261	-0.120	-3.388	＜0.001
Patient contact frequency	3.541	0.725	0.166	4.885	＜0.001

Table 5

The results of linear regression analysis to investigate the effect of demographic characteristics on medical staff's attitudes about early PR (N = 745).

Independent variables	*B* coefficient	Standard coefficient	*β*-value	Statistics	*P*-value
Constant	40.446	1.912		21.148	＜0.001
Gender	2.306	0.765	0.110	3.013	0.003
Hospital level	-1.044	0.426	-0.088	-2.451	0.014
The title of a professional post	1.681	0.738	0.093	2.277	0.023
Respiratory staff	-1.351	0.522	-0.110	-2.590	0.010

Table 6

The results of linear regression analysis to investigate the effect of demographic characteristics on medical staff's practices about early PR (N = 745).

Independent variables	*B* coefficient	Standard coefficient	*β*-value	Statistics	*P*-value
Constant	48.941	1.427		34.285	＜0.001
Work experience	-2.009	0.772	-0.111	-2.604	0.009
Understand relevant knowledge	-3.830	0.773	-0.212	-4.953	＜0.001
Patient contact frequency	0.031	0.012	0.100	2.639	0.009

BMJ Open

Knowledge, attitude, and practice of Chinese medical staff in early pulmonary rehabilitation during acute exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease: A cross-sectional study

Journal:	*BMJ Open*
Manuscript ID	bmjopen-2024-087610.R1
Article Type:	Original research
Date Submitted by the Author:	10-May-2025
Complete List of Authors:	Wang, Tingrui; Guizhou Medical University, School of nursing Wang, Zhangyi; The Affiliated Hengyang Hospital of Hunan Normal University & Hengyang Central Hospital, Nursing Department / Research and Teaching Department Yao, Li; The Affiliated Hospital of Guizhou Medical University, Department of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine Jia, Fangrong; Prince of Songkla University - Hat Yai Campus, Faculty of Nursing Li, Yaling; Guizhou Medical University, School of Nursing; The Affiliated Hospital of Guizhou Medical University, Department of Nursing Cai, Pe; The Affiliated Hospital of Guizhou Medical University, Department of Nursing Li, Qinqin; Guizhou Medical University, Nursing of School Liu, Yan; Guizhou Medical University, Nursing of School Wang, Tingshu; Guizhou Medical University, Nursing of School Chen, Yuhan; Guiqian International General Hospital, ENT-Head & Neck
Primary Subject Heading:	Nursing
Secondary Subject Heading:	Intensive care, Medical education and training, Health policy
Keywords:	China, Cognition, Cross-Sectional Studies, Education, Medical, Rehabilitation medicine < INTERNAL MEDICINE, Attitude

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Knowledge, attitude, and practice of Chinese medical staff in early pulmonary rehabilitation during acute exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease: A cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Objective To investigate the knowledge, attitude and practice(KAP) of early pulmonary rehabilitation(PR) of acute exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease(AECOPD) among Chinese medical staff and the relationship between them.

Design A multi-center cross-sectional survey was used in this study.

Setting The study was conducted at multiple hospitals in Guizhou Province, China.

Primary and secondary outcome measures A 41-item questionnaire was used to collect the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the KAP of the medical staff on the early PR of AECOPD.

Participants A total of 745 medical staff were recruited from several hospitals in Guizhou province by convenient sampling method.

Methods Cross-sectional design and web-based questionnaire survey were used to collect data.

Medical staff from a number of hospitals in Guizhou Province, China were recruited by means of convenience sampling. A total of 745 medical personnel were involved. SPSS software version 27 was used for descriptive analysis, independent *t* test, variance analysis and multiple linear regression analysis of the data.

Results The average KAP scores were 64.49 ± 17.24, 42.81 ± 5.95, and 41.39 ± 8.97. There were significant positive correlations between knowledge and attitude (R=0.491, P<0.001), knowledge and practice (R=0.129, P<0.001), and attitude and practice (R=0.246, P<0.001). Medical staff with prior PR training and AECOPD early PR experience had higher knowledge and practice scores. Attitudes were significantly influenced by gender, hospital level, professional title, and respiratory staff status, while practice scores were significantly affected by prior experience, knowledge, and patient contact frequency.

Conclusion The study found that medical staff's knowledge and attitudes affect their practices, and experience and education influence their knowledge. It suggests that organizations should enhance education and training to improve medical staff's knowledge and attitudes, thus enhancing clinical practice. However, the study's focus on Guizhou Province and the high number of nurses in the sample may limit the generalizability of the results.

KEYWORDS knowledge, attitude, practice, early pulmonary rehabilitation (PR), Acute exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (AECOPD), China

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

⟹ This study is the first of its kind in China to investigate the KAP of medical staff on PR of AECOPD.

⟹ This study was only conducted in Guizhou Province, China, and the proportion of nurses

was high, which affected the universality of the findings.

⟹ All of the data was self-reported by medical staff, which can create inherent bias.

⟹ As with all other cross-sectional studies, the data collection methods in this study capture a single moment, limiting the ability to make causal inferences.

INTRUDUCTION

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a prevalent and progressive respiratory ailment characterized by persistent airflow obstruction and respiratory symptoms. Despite its heterogeneity, COPD is primarily caused by the inhalation of particulate matter,[1 2] including cigarette smoke and air pollutants, in addition to genetic, developmental, and social factors. Furthermore, COPD frequently presents with acute exacerbations, which necessitate additional treatment and pose a significant public health concern in contemporary society.[2–4]

Acute exacerbations are a frequent occurrence among individuals diagnosed with COPD[5], commonly referred to as acute exacerbation of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease(AECOPD), have the potential to be severe, leading to hospitalizations and significant healthcare expenditures.[5 6] These exacerbations are a characteristic aspect of the disease and contribute significantly to both morbidity and mortality rates.[1 7] AECOPD have detrimental effects on patients' overall health and disease progression, rendering them more susceptible to subsequent exacerbations, hospitalizations, and even death. Consequently, the primary objective of treatment for patients experiencing AECOPD is to mitigate the adverse consequences associated with these events and prevent their recurrence.[8 9] These exacerbations can also result in further deterioration of quality of life, lung function, and functional status, while simultaneously increasing the likelihood of subsequent hospitalization and premature mortality. AECOPD, defined as an acute

event marked by symptom exacerbation necessitating medication adjustment, may expedite disease progression and heighten the susceptibility to hospital admissions and mortality, in addition to diminishing overall quality of life.[10 11]

According to a statement from the American Thoracic Society (ATS) and the European Respiratory Society, Pulmonary Rehabilitation (PR) is a comprehensive non-pharmacological treatment that holds the highest potential for enhancing symptoms of COPD PR serves as a fundamental intervention in the management of patients with stable COPD, encompassing exercise training, education, and behavioral modifications.[12 13] While PR programs are predominantly offered to stable patients or post-discharge, there is a scarcity of training programs tailored to acute exacerbations during hospitalization.[10] There exists a substantial body of evidence that substantiates the advantages of PR subsequent to hospitalization for AECOPD, encompassing enhanced exercise capacity and health-related quality of life, as well as diminished readmissions and mortality rates.[14] Nevertheless, the rates of referral and acceptance for PR remain disappointingly low. Prior data has demonstrated that a mere 30% of eligible patients are referred for PR following hospitalization, with less than 10% successfully completing the program. The obstacles impeding referral and acceptance are intricate and multifaceted in nature.[10]

The objective of this study was to examine the knowledge, attitude and practice（KAP） of Chinese medical personnel regarding early PR with AECOPD, as well as to establish the correlation between their KAP in relation to early PR. This exploration of data on medical personnel's KAP and their interrelationships can yield valuable insights for enhancing quality. Researchers have indicated that knowledge has a positive impact on a person's attitude, which in

turn affects practice or behavior,[15] based on which we assumed that the knowledge of medical personnel in PR is directly or indirectly related to practice through attitude.

METHODS

Design and setting

This study employed a multi-center cross-sectional survey to investigate medical staff in various hospitals in Guizhou Province, China, from July to October 2023, utilizing an online questionnaire. The study was guided by the behavioral theory referred to as 'Knowledge-Attitude-Belief Practice (KABP)'.[16] All medical personnel employed in the various hospitals from which data were gathered were deemed eligible for participation through convenience sampling. Convenient sampling may restrict the generalizability of the findings, as the sample might not represent China's entire medical workforce. Self-reported data can also be biased by social expectations, with participants giving socially acceptable rather than genuine responses. To address this, we used a reverse scoring item to identify inconsistencies. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights into the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of healthcare workers in Guizhou Province about early pulmonary rehabilitation for AECOPD. The sample size for this cross-sectional study was determined by considering 9 independent variables, 3 questionnaire dimensions, and a maximum of 19 items in the scale, resulting in a minimum requirement of 180 participants. To ensure statistical robustness, we aimed for at least 300 participants. Anticipating a 30% response rate,[17] we invited 1,000 respondents and received 753 responses. After excluding 8 responses during data processing, 745 responses were included in the final analysis. Figure 1 illustrates the detailed algorithm for sample selection, registration, and filtering. In order to be included in the study, these eligible individuals were required to meet two specific criteria: (a) they had to be currently employed in the hospitals for a minimum duration of one year, and (b)

they had to possess a Practice Certificate issued by the Ministry of Health of China. All participants willingly participated in the study, while medical personnel who did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded from the study due to the unavailability of an informed consent form.[18] The completion of the questionnaire signifies consent, resulting in a total sample size of 745 instances. To ensure the questionnaire data's quality and validity, each item is designated as a compulsory question, and only the initial response's valid data is chosen based on the IP address and answer time, thereby preventing multiple submissions from a single device. Individuals with a score rate exceeding 85% are classified as excellent, those falling within the 60%-85% range are considered good, while scores below 60% are categorized as poor.

The questionnaires

A structured self-report questionnaire was developed with the purpose of assessing the KAP of medical personnel in relation to early PR for AECOPD. Our decision to employ a self-designed questionnaire encompassing professional knowledge, precautions, and operational techniques of PR is believed to provide valuable guidance to medical staff in facilitating patients' engagement in early PR. The design of the questionnaire was executed in two distinct stages. In the initial phase, the research team conducted an extensive literature review to formulate a preliminary version of the questionnaire, which was later refined using the Delphi Method. In the subsequent stage, the revised document will be subjected to expert scrutiny, ultimately leading to the creation of the final questionnaire. The questionnaire encompassed three distinct dimensions, namely knowledge (comprising 19 items), attitude (comprising 11 items), and practice (comprising 11 items).The knowledge dimension of this study primarily focused on the definition, main contents, curative effect, contraindications, implementation period, and principles of PR. Participants were asked to

rate their level of understanding on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Very little' to 'Very well'. The attitude dimension, on the other hand, assessed participants' perceptions of the impact of PR, role perception, and management of AECOPD in clinical practice. This dimension also utilized a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'. The 'practice' dimension focuses on early PR actions and skills in AECOPD, such as: (1) evaluating patient eligibility for early PR; (2) implementing PR methods like breathing exercises and physical training; (3) tracking patient progress in PR; and (4) providing PR benefits and technical education. Each aspect is rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 'not willing' to 'willing'. To mitigate the risk of subjects completing the questionnaire in a careless manner and to minimize the occurrence of invalid responses, we employed a strategy of incorporating reverse questions within the first five items of the attitude dimension. The content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by a panel of 16 local experts who fulfilled the following criteria: (1) possessing expertise in critical care, nursing management, nursing research, respiratory specialist nursing, or respiratory department; (2) holding academic titles of associate chief senior nurse/doctor, associate professor, or higher; and (3) affiliated with tertiary hospitals or medical colleges. Following two rounds of expert reviews and subsequent modifications, the Cronbach's α coefficient and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin(KMO) value of the final PR scale were determined to be 0.953 and 0.969, respectively. Overall, the questionnaire exhibited acceptable levels of validity and reliability within the context of this study.

Data collection and ethical considerations

It is important to note that participation in the study was entirely voluntary. To gather data, web-based questionnaires were employed, with the design and creation of the questionnaire link being entrusted to Questionnaire Star (Changsha Ranxing Information Technology Co. Ltd).Data

will be gathered via the facilitation of a We Chat group. Upon completion of the questionnaire, respondents are required to click the 'Submit' button to save their responses. Additionally, participants will not be provided with any financial compensation upon completing the questionnaire. This study received approval from the Medical Science Ethics Committee of the Affiliated Hospital of Guizhou Medical University (Ethics Approval No. 2023 Ethics Review No. 061-01), and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The questionnaires were designed to be anonymous, and no personal information related to medical personnel will be collected, thereby ensuring that respondents' identities remain unlinked and confidential.

Data analysis

In this study, IBM SPSS 27.0 for Windows was used for statistical analysis. To ensure the robustness of the statistical analysis, we performed a normality test (Shapiro-Wilk) for all continuous variables. Descriptive information was presented as n(%) or mean ± standard deviation. The calculation of score percentages for both overall and individual dimensions involved dividing the average score by the theoretical maximum and multiplying by 100%. Certain continuous variables, such as age and number of years of hospitalization experience, were categorized into distinct groups for analysis. In order to examine the disparities between the scale and demographic information, we employed an independent sample t-test and a one-way ANOVA. In the case of the t-test, if both samples meet the assumption of equal variance, the t-test of equal variance is utilized. Conversely, if the variances are unequal, a t-test for unequal variances is employed.The Tukey test was employed to conduct group comparisons. The examination of the association between KAP entailed the utilization of Pearson correlation coefficients. To examine the factors influencing KAP, we employed multiple linear regression analysis, adjusting for potential confounders

including age, years of experience, and hospital classification to ensure the robustness of our results. Bilateral significance tests were conducted for all analyses, with the significance threshold established at 0.05.

Patient and public involvement

No patient is involved.

RESULTS

Sociodemographic characteristics of participants

Out of 1000 invited participants, 753 medical staff completed the questionnaire, yielding 745 valid responses. This results in a 75.3% response rate and a 98.9% validity rate. The majority of participants were female (680, 91.3%) and predominantly occupied nursing roles (684, 91.8%). Among the respondents, 409 primarily worked in the intensive care department of tertiary hospitals, while the remaining 334 were affiliated with secondary hospitals, accounting for 44.8% of the sample. Furthermore, a significant proportion of participants held a bachelor's degree or higher (566, 76%). Approximately 43.9% of the participants had undergone early pulmonary rehabilitation training for AECOPD, while a similar proportion (42.7%) had practical experience in AECOPD early PR work. Further comprehensive details regarding the sociodemographic and professional characteristics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Sociodemographic characteristics.

Socio-demographic variables	n(%)
Gender	
Male	65(8.7)
Female	680(91.3)
Age	
20 to 29	352 (47.2)
30 to 39	329 (44.2)
Above 40	64 (8.6)
Education	

Postgraduate or above	5(0.7)
Bachelor degree	561(75.3)
Three-year college education	174(23.3)
Secondary vocational school education	5(0.7)
Occupation	
Doctor	61(8.2)
Nurse	684(91.8)
Years of working	
1 to 5	221(41.9)
5 to 9	254(31.9)
Above 10	270(26.2)
The title of a professional post	
junior professional title	462(62.0)
medium-grade professional title	251(33.7)
Associate senior title	26(3.5)
high professional title	6(3.5)
Hospital level	
tertiary hospitals	334(44.8)
second-class hospital	409(54.9)
Class-I hospital	2(0.3)
Receive training	
Yes	327(43.9)
no	418(56.1)
Work experience	
Yes	318(42.7)
no	417(57.3)

The level of KAP of medical staff towards AECOPD pulmonary rehabilitation

The average knowledge score was 64.49±17.24, corresponding to a scoring rate of approximately 68%. Likewise, the average attitude score was 42.81±5.95, indicating a scoring rate of around 71%. Furthermore, the average attitude score was 41.39±8.97, with a scoring rate of about 75%. Detailed analysis results for each dimension are provided in Table 2.

Effects of demographic and job-related variables on health care workers' KAP toward pulmonary rehabilitation for AECOPD

Knowledge

The findings from the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) presented in Table 2 indicate significant variations in knowledge scores across various departments. Additionally, significant

differences in knowledge scores were observed when comparing different frequencies of contact with patients. However, no significant relationship was found between age, education level, working time, professional title, hospital level, position, and knowledge.Based on the results of the independent-sample t-test, significant variations in knowledge scores were identified among distinct categories, including gender, occupation, presence of work experience in early PR of AECOPD, participation in training related to early PR of AECOPD, familiarity with relevant knowledge, and employment as respiratory department staff. Based on the findings of Tukey's test, it was observed that knowledge scores in various departments such as stomatology, gynecology, ENT, among others, exhibited significant disparities when compared to the scores in emergency, internal medicine, and ICU. Furthermore, variations in knowledge scores were also evident across different levels of patient interaction, specifically within the ranges of 0-9%, 10%-29%, and ≥30%.

Attitude

Based on the findings from the independent-sample t-test and one-way ANOVA analysis, significant statistical disparities were observed across various demographic variables, including gender, age, occupation, years of work, title, position, hospital level, experience in AECOPD PR work, familiarity with AECOPD PR knowledge, department affiliation, and respiratory staff status. Based on the findings of Tukey's test, a notable disparity in attitude scores was observed between individuals aged 20-29 and those aged ≥40. Furthermore, significant variations were identified in the scores of individuals with work experience of ≥10 years compared to those with work experience of 5-9 years and ≤5 years.

Practice

The results of the independent-sample t-test indicated significant relationships between occupation,

participation in AECOPD PR training, relevant work experience, knowledge, and being a respiratory staff member with practice. However, the one-way ANOVA analysis revealed that only the department of the subjects and the frequency of patient contact were significantly associated with practice, while the other variables did not demonstrate statistical significance. Based on the findings of Tukey's test, a statistically significant disparity was observed in the practice scores among patients with varying frequencies of contact, specifically those scoring between 10 to 29 percent, ≥30 percent, and 0-9 percent.

Table 2 The KAP score

Variables	**Knowledge**		**Attitudes**		**Practices**	
	Mean±SD	**Test results**	**Mean±SD**	**Test results**	**Mean±SD**	**Test results**
Gender						
Male	70.49±15.97	*t'*=3.146	40.94±7.11	*t'*=-2.251	42.94±8.02	*t*=1.454
Female	63.92±17.26	***P*=0.002**	42.99±5.80	*P*=0.027	41.25±9.05	*P*=0.146
Age						
20 to 29	64.82±15.98	*F*=0.121	42.14±5.80	*F*=5.164	41.05±8.49	*F*=0.620
30 to 39	64.22±18.28	*P*=0.886	43.24±5.93	***P*=0.006**	41.60±9.40	*P*=0.538
Above 40	64.11±18.68		44.30±6.46		42.23±9.40	
Education						
Postgraduate or above	81.80±10.94	*F*=1.754	42.60±4.98	*F*=0.715	41.20±7.73	*F*=0.608
Bachelor degree	64.51±17.54	*P*=0.155	42.97±6.08	*P*=0.543	41.64±9.05	*P*=0.610
Three-year college education	63.93±16.17		42.35±5.53		40.65±8.76	
Secondary vocational school education	65.60±20.66		40.60±5.37		39.60±9.92	
Occupation						
Doctor	73.90±15.72	*t'*=4.814	44.28±9.41	*t*=2.631	39.36±6.65	*t*=-4.794
Nurse	63.65±17.13	***P*<0.001**	41.14±8.90	***P*=0.009**	43.12±5.80	***p*<0.001**
Years of working						
1 to 5	65.92±15.39	*F*=1.177	42.33±5.84	*F*=7.063	41.03±8.23	*F*=2.764
5 to 9	63.54±17.59	*P*=0.309	42.09±5.90	***p*<0.001**	40.65±8.90	*P*=0.064
Above 10	64.23±18.31		43.88±5.95		42.40±9.57	
The title of a professional post						
Junior professional title	64.50±16.75	*F*=1.396	42.12±5.74	*F*=5.78	40.98±8.65	*F*=0.930

Medium-grade professional title	65.18±17.72	*P*=0.243	44.04±6.19	***p*<0.001**	42.15±9.40	*P*=0.426
Associate senior title	57.92±20.71		42.96±5.67		41.46±10.52	
High professional title	64.00±16.96		43.17±5.31		41.50±8.19	
Hospital level						
Tertiary hospitals	64.94±17.09	*F*=0.267	43.36±6.15	*F*=3.131	41.10±9.26	*F*=0.614
Second-class hospital	64.11±17.32	*P*=0.766	42.38±5.75	***P*=0.044**	41.61±8.74	*P*=0.541
Class-I hospital	68.50±36.06		38.00±2.83		46.50±12.02	
Receive training						
Yes	73.72±12.76	*t'*=15.162	43.29±6.46	*t'*=1.912	43.84±8.41	*t'*=6.803
no	57.27±16.86	***p*<0.001**	42.43±5.49	*P*=0.056	9.48±8.95	***p*<0.001**
Work experience						
Yes	74.03±12.35	*t'*=15.488	43.47±6.54	*t'*=2.544	44.15±8.27	*t'*=7.586
no	57.40±16.96	***p*<0.001**	42.32±5.42	***P*=0.011**	39.34±8.94	***p*<0.001**
Understand relevant knowledge						
Yes	73.10±12.81	*t'*=18.500	43.33±6.54	*t'*=2.876	43.82±8.42	*t*=8.902
no	53.19±15.75	***p*<0.001**	42.12±5.00	***P*=0.04**	38.20±8.70	***p*<0.001**
Hospital position						
General staff	64.48±17.11	*F*=0.118	42.56±5.89	*F*=7.021	41.40±8.88	*F*=1.554
Head nurse	64.24±19.35	*P*=0.889	45.56±6.06	***P*<0.001**	40.53±9.96	*P*=0.212
Head of department	67.38±14.85		44.75±5.20		46.50±9.34	
Department						
Internal medicine	68.72±16.10	*F*=22.752	43.32±6.36	*F*=2.429	42.57±8.70	*F*=4.810
Department of surgery	58.01±16.86	***p*<0.001**	41.57±5.19	***P*=0.046**	39.60±9.31	***p*<0.001**
Emergency treatment	65.11±15.86		42.34±5.04		41.63±7.99	
Intensive care unit	70.53±12.01		43.34±6.42		41.91±7.31	
Other	55.94±17.73		42.36±5.26		39.39±9.71	
Respiratory staff						
Yes	73.42±13.64	*t'*=12.664	43.84±6.92	*t'*=3.468	43.60±8.52	*t*=5.330
no	59.09±16.96	***p*<0.001**	42.18±5.18	***p*<0.001**	40.05±8.99	***p*<0.001**
Patient contact frequency						
0 to 9%	52.70±17.65	*F*=83.310	42.12±5.23	*F*=1.536	37.92±9.33	*F*=19.301
10% to 29%	62.88±16.33	***p*<0.001**	42.96±5.77	*P*=0.216	41.63±8.71	***p*<0.001**
Above 30%	71.10±14.05		43.05±6.35		42.93±8.51	

t', t-tests for unequal variances.

Correlation study of KAP of medical staff on PR in patients with AECOPD

The findings of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 3, indicating a notable and positive correlation between knowledge and attitudes (R = 0.491, P < 0.001). As the knowledge score increased, there was a corresponding elevation in attitude scores. Additionally, a significant and evident correlation between knowledge and practice was observed, with a statistically significant

relationship (R = 0.129, P < 0.001). Furthermore, a strong correlation between attitude and practice was clearly evident (R = 0.246, P < 0.001).

Table 3 Correlation of KAP related to early PR from AECOPD of medical staff.

	Scores of knowledge	Scores of attitude	Scores of practice
Scores of knowledge			
Pearson Correlation	1	0.491**	0.129**
Sig.		**0.000**	**0.000**
N	745	745	745
Scores of attitudes			
Pearson Correlation	.491**	1	0.246**
Sig.	**0.000**		**0.000**
N	745	745	745
Scores of practices			
Pearson Correlation	0.129**	0.246**	1
Sig.	**0.000**	**0.000**	
N	745	745	745

Results of several linear regression equations

Statistically significant variables in univariate analyses were added to multivariate linear stepwise regression. An analysis was conducted employing multiple linear regression equations to explore the independent associations between KAP scores. The findings from the Multiple linear regression model Supplemental Table 1 revealed significant associations between knowledge and variables such as training received, AECOPD early PR work experience, familiarity with relevant knowledge, occupation as respiratory staff, and frequency of patient contact. After accounting for other variables, the analysis presented in Supplemental Table 2 demonstrates that gender, hospital level, professional title, and various positions within the respiratory staff are independent factors that significantly impact attitudes. Furthermore, the presence of prior AECOPD early PR work experience, knowledge pertaining to the subject matter, and frequency of contact with AECOPD patients were identified as independent factors influencing practice scores, as indicated in Supplemental Table 3.

DISCUSSION

AECOPD have been found to have a substantial negative impact on quality of life and an elevated risk of mortality.[19] Existing guidelines strongly advocate for the implementation of early PR following a severe exacerbation.[12] Recent research has additionally demonstrated the advantages of early PR during hospitalization for the management of AECOPD, highlighting its safety and reliability.[5 20] The objective of this study was to evaluate the level of KAP among medical personnel regarding early PR for AECOPD. Our findings indicate that medical staff in the Guizhou region of China demonstrate promising KAP towards early PR for AECOPD. However, there is a need for improvement in the KAP of nurses in this area. Additionally, Our study revealed a significant correlation between KAP scores for early PR in AECOPD. This finding aligns with previous research, indicating the necessity for further enhancement of PR education programs within our nation.[20] Additionally, it is evident that a majority of medical professionals, particularly nurses, possess a general comprehension of the field of PR, yet their knowledge lacks depth and comprehensiveness. However, Chinese scholars are actively endeavoring to address this phenomenon. Presently, studies pertaining to the PR management mode, spearheaded by respiratory specialist nurses, demonstrate the noteworthy long-term impact of multi-specialist group collaboration in PR led by specialist nurses.[21 22] This not only influences patient prognosis but also holds immense significance for the advancement of Chinese medical personnel in the realm of PR.

A thorough understanding and recognition of early pulmonary rehabilitation among he althcare professionals is imperative for attaining favorable outcomes in patients with AECO PD, as it serves as the foundation for adopting suitable attitudes and practices.[23] The prese nt study revealed that the rate of knowledge pertaining to early PR was approximately 68

%, with an average knowledge score of 64.49±17.24. These findings suggest that medical personnel possess inadequate knowledge regarding early PR, aligning with the research out comes reported by Chinese scholars Su et al.[24] Among the items assessed, pulmonary reha bilitation programs, prognostic and curative knowledge received the highest average scores, in that order. Conversely, the content of PR, the scale of assessment, and the related kno wledge of the principles followed obtained the lowest average scores. These findings indic ate that while medical staff possess a general understanding of early PR, their knowledge lacks comprehensiveness and depth. Currently, the most recent research demonstrates the ef ficacy and safety of early PR treatment for AECOPD.[5 25–27] The field of medicine encomp asses various components, including daily diagnosis, treatment, and health service support, all of which heavily rely on the involvement of nurses.[28] Consequently, the nursing workl oad is substantial and demanding. Particularly, due to factors such as limited nursing staff and the ratio of medical personnel, there is a scarcity of healthcare providers during rotat ion tasks, resulting in a primary focus on routine treatment and disease management.[29] Th e inability to promptly and comprehensively update the most recent knowledge and skills necessitates the need for further standardization of the rotation system for medical personn el, scientific innovation in nursing scheduling methods, and rational establishment of the m edical care ratio.[30] Furthermore, telemedicine presents potential benefits in mitigating diseas e symptoms.[31] particularly when integrated with educational initiatives, self-management str ategies (including swallowing training, the gradual reintegration into physical activity, food texture modification, and psychological support), and physical exercise.

In the present study, the attitude dimension score rate among medical staff was approximately 71%, with an average score of 42.81±5.95. However, a mere 8.2% of the population achieved a scoring rate of no less than 85%, while 71.4% attained a scoring rate ranging from 60% to 85%. These findings indicate a predominantly positive inclination of medical staff towards early PR. Not exactly consistent with previous studies, the study conducted by Su Er Guo et al. revealed that a considerable percentage of nurses (86%) recognized the significance of PR in the care of individuals diagnosed with COPD.[32] Conversely, Johnston et al. (year) reported that 77% of healthcare professionals expressed a strong belief in the utmost importance of PR for COPD patients.[33] The observed outcome may be attributed to variations in hospital level and specific departments. Findings from this investigation indicate a statistically significant elevation in the attitude score among medical personnel in tertiary hospitals compared to those in primary hospitals ($P = 0.044$). Furthermore, medical staff working in the respiratory department exhibited significantly higher attitude scores in comparison to their counterparts in other departments ($P < 0.001$). Previous research has demonstrated that the educational background of nursing staff with limited experience and junior positions in primary hospitals in China tends to be subpar.[34] Currently, clinical nursing staff exhibit a low and heterogeneous level of scientific research proficiency. It is imperative for nursing managers to implement systematic training programs that enhance nurses' knowledge and practical skills in scientific research within the field of nursing.[35] Evidently, substantial evidence supports the notion that knowledge significantly impacts attitudes.

In the present study, the practice dimension of medical staff yielded a score rate of approximately 75%, with an average score of 41.39±8.97. These findings suggest that the overall performance of medical staff in implementing PR is commendable. However, it should be noted

that these results do not align entirely with the study conducted by Su Er Guo et al.[32] Following extensive research, early PR for COPD has yielded significant outcomes, establishing its status as a secure and efficacious non-pharmacological intervention. Similarly, AECOPD early PR builds upon the advancements in COPD early pulmonary rehabilitation and is likewise acknowledged as a reliable and effective non-pharmacological treatment. Only 25.9% of the population achieved a scoring rate of no less than 85%, while 48.9% of the population achieved a scoring rate between 60% and 85%. Additionally, 12.9% of the population scored below 60%. Notably, the three areas with the lowest scores were the mastery of accident cause analysis, the ability to organize patients in learning relevant content, and the proficiency in assessment techniques. However, it is worth noting that a subset of medical personnel exhibited suboptimal scores, potentially attributable to the limited sample pool utilized in this study. A significant majority of the samples were derived from Level I and Level II hospitals, suggesting a plausible explanation for the lack of standardized training among a considerable portion of healthcare providers.[36] Consequently, the inability to deliver tailored and proficient treatment and care to patients undergoing PR may be a consequence of this deficiency.

The findings of this study indicate significant positive associations between KAP($P < 0.01$).This finding suggests that a higher level of PR knowledge among medical personnel is associated with the ability to cultivate a positive attitude and enhance behavioral compliance. It is evident that a causal relationship exists between knowledge, belief, and action, aligning with the theoretical framework positing that knowledge influences attitude, which in turn drives behavior. The medical staff in the respiratory department assumes a crucial role as the primary executors of PR training for patients with AECOPD. Extensive research has demonstrated that a deeper

understanding of pulmonary rehabilitation among medical staff correlates positively with their ability to enhance patients' motivation and adherence to the program.[37] Ballesteros Reviriego et al.[38] demonstrated that early physical therapy enhances lung function and muscle strength without adverse effects, influencing both clinical practice and policy. The study found that better knowledge, attitudes, and practices among healthcare workers, through targeted education, can boost their participation and confidence in implementing early pulmonary rehabilitation for AECOPD. This may result from a better grasp of PR principles, enhanced patient assessment skills, and more effective clinical decisions. Hospitals can offer regular workshops or online courses on early PR techniques. Policymakers might also integrate early PR training into ongoing education for healthcare professionals, particularly in resource-limited areas with limited access to specialized training. These initiatives can enhance knowledge and attitudes, leading to improved clinical practices and patient outcomes.

Through the utilization of multiple linear regression analysis, our study revealed a significant correlation between knowledge and various factors, including training, prior experience in AECOPD PR, comprehension of relevant knowledge, occupation as respiratory workers, and frequency of patient interaction. The findings of this study suggest that medical personnel who have received training in PR and possess work experience in this field demonstrate superior levels of knowledge and practice. These results indicate that practical experience in clinical settings can enhance one's understanding, abilities, and confidence in the context of PR, aligning with previous research findings.[39] The findings of the survey conducted by Mahendran R et al. on PR among nurses indicate that participation in training courses and gaining clinical experience have the potential to enhance nurses' KAP.[40] Engagement in PR training and relevant professional

experience can enhance the knowledge and proficiency of healthcare personnel, thereby influencing the clinical advancement of PR.

The study has limitations: its cross-sectional design prevents establishing causality between knowledge, attitudes, and practice, necessitating longitudinal studies or trials. Self-reported data may introduce social expectation bias, suggesting the need for observational measures in future research. Additionally, the sample, primarily nurses from Guizhou Province, may limit the findings' generalizability to other regions or medical professionals.Future research should include a more diverse sample to enhance external validity and address potential confounding factors like experience, education, and hospital class. While some factors were controlled in our analysis, unmeasured variables may influence outcomes. Collecting comprehensive data on these elements could clarify their impact on early PR-related knowledge, attitudes, and practices in AECOPD.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the KAP of Chinese medical staff in Guizhou Province regarding early PR for AECOPD. While attitudes towards early PR are generally positive, there are gaps in knowledge and practical application. The study finds strong positive correlations between knowledge, attitudes, and practices, indicating that better education and training could improve clinical outcomes. Medical staff with prior PR training and experience scored higher in knowledge and practice, highlighting the need for ongoing education and hands-on experience. However, the study's focus on one region and a high number of nurses limits its generalizability. To enhance early PR for AECOPD, healthcare organizations should prioritize education, encourage positive attitudes, and provide clinical exposure to improve patient care. Future research should involve more diverse samples and longitudinal studies to explore these relationships further.

figure legend： **Figure 1**.Algorithm showing sample selection, enrolment, exclusion and final analysis.

This figure illustrates the flow of participants from initial recruitment to final inclusion in the study. A total of 1000 participants were invited, 753 completed the questionnaire, and 745 were included in the final analysis after exclusions.

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Acknowledgment We thank all the medical staff who participated in our study. We are grateful to the nursing departments and medical records departments of several hospitals in Guizhou for their support in data collection.

Contributions TW,ZW and LY: supervision, project administration, methodology, formal analysis, data curation, resources, writing–original draft, writing–review and editing. FJ: investigation, validation, conceptualisation, formal analysis, data curation, writing – review and editing. YL and PC: conceptualisation, methodology, investigation, writing – review and editing, resources.QL and YL: conceptualisation, methodology, investigation, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing, resources.TW: methodology, investigation, data curation, conceptualisation, project administration, and editing.YC:formal analysis and review and editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.TW is the guarantor responsible for the overall content.

Funding This research was supported by the Natural Science Foundation of Hunan Province in 2025 (No: 2025JJ80594),The Scientific Research Project of Hunan Nursing Association (No: HNKYP202413),Young Talent Project of Hunan Nursing Association (No: Q20241204020),The National Natural Science Foundation (NSFC) Regional Fund Cultivation Program project of Affiliated Hospital of Guizhou Medical University (No. Gyfynsfc[2023]35), the 2023 research project of Chinese Nursing Association (No. ZHKYQ202316),The fourth batch of projects was approved by the Affiliated Hospital of Guizhou Medical University, Fudan University Evidence-Based Nursing Center (No. gyfyhlxz-2023-2) and Guiyang Science and Technology Plan Project (No. [2022]-4-2-2).

Competing Interest Statement The authors claim they have no competing interests. The funding unit, The Affiliated Hospital of Guizhou Medical University and The Affiliated Hengyang Hospital of Hunan Normal University & Hengyang Central Hospital, provided financial support for the study, but was not involved in the study design, data analysis, interpretation, or writing of the paper.

Competing interests None declared.

Patient and public involvement Patients and/or the public were not involved inthe design, or conduct, or reporting, or dissemination plans of this research.

Patient consent for publication Not applicable

Ethics approval The Medical Science Ethics Committee of the Affiliated Hospital of Guizhou Medical University approved this study (Ethics Approval No. 2023 Ethics Review No. 061-01), and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

Data availability statement All data relevant to the study are included in the article or uploaded as supplementary information.

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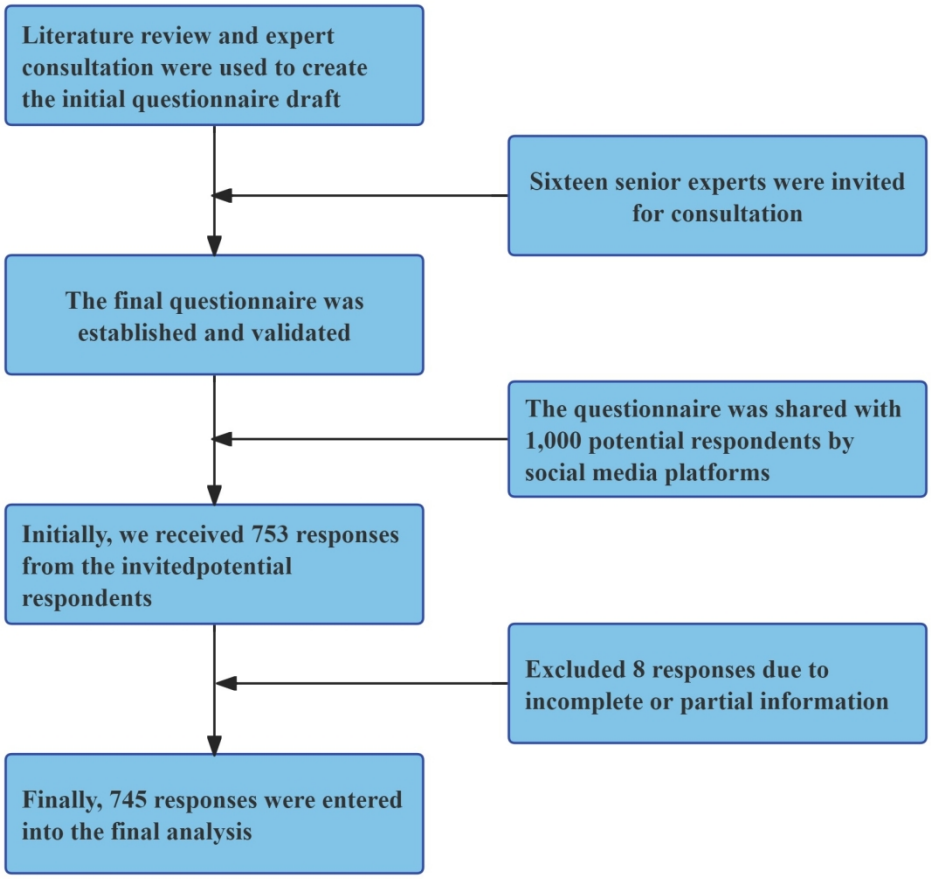

figure legend:
This figure illustrates the flow of participants from initial recruitment to final inclusion in the study. A total of 1000 participants were invited, 753 completed the questionnaire, and 745 were included in the final analysis after exclusions.

666x630mm (72 x 72 DPI)

Supplemental **Table1**

The results of linear regression analysis to investigate the effect of demographic characteristics on medical staff's knowledge about early PR (N = 745).

Independent variables	***B* coefficient**	**Standard coefficient**	***β*-value**	**Statistics**	***P*-value**
Constant	98.935	5.141		19.245	＜0.001
Receive training	-5.423	1.251	-0.156	-4.336	＜0.001
Work experience	-3.760	1.269	-0.108	-2.963	0.003
Understand relevant knowledge	-10.705	1.323	-0.308	-8.094	＜0.001
Respiratory staff	-4.273	1.261	-0.120	-3.388	＜0.001
Patient contact frequency	3.541	0.725	0.166	4.885	＜0.001

Supplemental **Table2**

The results of linear regression analysis to investigate the effect of demographic characteristics on medical staff's attitudes about early PR (N = 745).

Independent variables	***B* coefficient**	**Standard coefficient**	***β*-value**	**Statistics**	***P*-value**
Constant	40.446	1.912		21.148	＜0.001
Gender	2.306	0.765	0.110	3.013	0.003
Hospital level	-1.044	0.426	-0.088	-2.451	0.014
The title of a professional post	1.681	0.738	0.093	2.277	0.023
Respiratory staff	-1.351	0.522	-0.110	-2.590	0.010

Supplemental **Table3**

The results of linear regression analysis to investigate the effect of demographic characteristics on medical staff's practices about early PR (N = 745).

Independent variables	***B* coefficient**	**Standard coefficient**	***β*-value**	**Statistics**	***P*-value**
Constant	48.941	1.427		34.285	＜0.001
Work experience	-2.009	0.772	-0.111	-2.604	0.009
Understand relevant knowledge	-3.830	0.773	-0.212	-4.953	＜0.001
Patient contact frequency	0.031	0.012	0.100	2.639	0.009