

P.E.A.R.L.S. Practical Evidence About Real Life Situations



Contracts between patients and healthcare practitioners for improving patients' adherence to treatment, prevention and health promotion activities

Clinical Question	Can contracts between patients and healthcare practitioners improve patients' adherence to treatment, prevention and health promotion activities?
Bottom Line	There is limited evidence that contracts can potentially contribute to improving adherence. However, large, good quality studies do not provide evidence to routinely recommend contracts for improving adherence to treatment or preventive health regimens.
Caveat	Trials evaluated the use of contracts in the treatment of addiction, hypertension, weight control and a variety of other areas. Effects on adherence were not detected when measured over longer periods, eg, 6 or 12 months.
Context	Contracts are a verbal or written agreement that a patient makes with themselves, with healthcare practitioners, or with carers, where participants commit to a set of behaviours related to the care of a patient. Contracts aim to improve the patient's adherence to treatment or health promotion programmes.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Bosch-Capblanch X, Abba K, Prictor M, Garner P. Contracts between patients and healthcare practitioners for improving patients' adherence to treatment, prevention and health promotion activities. <i>Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews</i> 2007, Issue 2. Art. No.: CD004808. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD004808.pub3. This review contains 30 trials involving 4691 participants.
PEARLS No. 13 October 2007, written by Brian R McAvoy	

NNT = numbers needed to treat to benefit one person

NNH = numbers needed to harm to benefit one person

Both NNT and NNH are only reported if the studies or pooling of studies is statistically significant

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