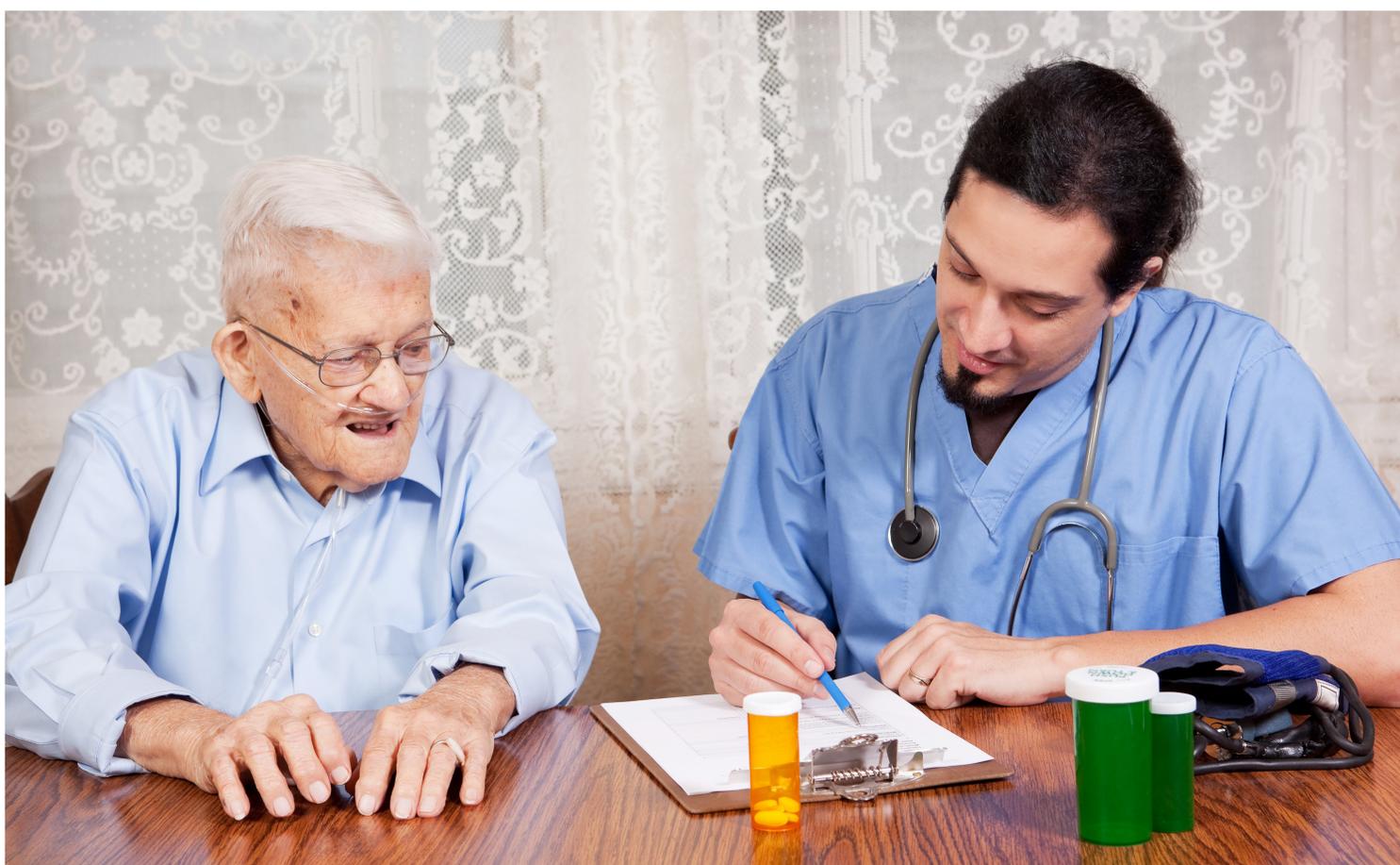


# Nurses' Observations of Health Status of Older Patients with COPD

## A Qualitative Exploratory Study in Home Health Nursing Care

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### INTRODUCTION

The number of patients receiving home health nursing care is increasing, and many of these patients are elderly with complex care needs caused by multi morbidly, chronic diseases, and multiple functional limitations. Observations and assessment of health status in patients with COPD is important because of frequent changes in condition that requires specific approaches to clinical care. Registered nurses (RN) in home health nursing play an important role in observing and assessing older home-dwelling patients.

### OBJECTIVE:

The aim of this study was to explore and describe how RNs in home health nursing care make observations of older patients with COPD.

### METHODS:

A qualitative exploratory study design. Data were collected from October 2017 to October 2018 in Mid-Norway, through observation of nurse-patient interactions (n = 17) during the home health RNs' regular visits to the patients' homes. The think-aloud technique was used in observing the RN-patient interaction. Individual follow-up interviews with the RNs were conducted immediately after the visits were over. Both the RN-patient verbal interactions during home visits and the follow-up interviews were audio recorded. The data was analysed by qualitative content analysis.

### RESULTS:

The results show that the RNs did not conduct a systematic observation of the patients' health status, and no guidelines or equipment's were used in assessing the patient. RNs made use of their senses

when observing the patient and the context and followed up with questions to the patient.

The context seemed to be a crucial element in the nurses' observations of the patients' condition. In addition, knowledge of the patient and his usual condition, and not nursing documentation in the electronic patient record, was significant to detect possible deterioration in the patient's condition. Often the nurses had known the patient for a long time, and they talked to them as if they were old acquaintances.

### CONCLUSIONS:

This qualitative study is expected to contribute knowledge of RNs' observations of older home-dwelling patients with COPD. This knowledge may contribute to improvements and high quality of care for these patients.

**KEYWORDS:** registered nurses, observations, municipal care, elderly patients, home health care, COPD