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EUGMS Abstract:

Transitional care within an integrated care project in Belgium – experiences and perceptions of stakeholders

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Introduction: In 2015, a plan for integrated care was launched by the Belgium government that resulted in the implementation of 12 integrated care pilot project across Belgium. The pilot project Zorgzaam Leuven consists of a multidisciplinary local consortium aiming to bring long-term change towards integrated care for the region of Leuven, Belgium. This study aims to explore experiences and perceptions of stakeholders involved in four transitional care actions that are part of Zorgzaam Leuven.

Methods: Four actions with a focus on improving transitional care were selected and stakeholders involved in those actions were identified using the snow-ball method. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and inductive thematic analysis was performed.

Results: Fourteen interviews were conducted. Professionals appreciated to be involved in the decision making early onwards either by proposing own initiatives or by providing their input in shaping actions. Moreover, improved team spirit and community feeling with other HCPs was described that reduced barriers of communication and thus benefitted both patients and professionals. The actions provided supportive tools and various learning opportunities that participants acknowledged. Technical shortcomings (e.g. integrated patient records) and key challenges (e.g. financial and political support) were identified that impeded long-term planning of actions.

Key conclusion: The pilot project Zorgzaam Leuven triggered professional motivation and supported the development of collaborative multidisciplinary care networks at the local level, which are crucial to successfully improve transitional care for vulnerable patients.