

How might an influx of new users, resulting from the AD HOC trial, impact the Asthma + Lung UK (ALUK) Asthma Online Health Community (OHC)?



^{1,2}Wood HE, ^{1,2}Karampatakis GD, ³Li X, ²Day B, ^{1,2}Mihaylova B, ¹Bird V, ^{1,2}Taylor S, ³Panzarasa P, ^{1,2}Griffiths CJ, ^{1,2}De Simoni A

¹Wolfson Institute of Population Health, Queen Mary University of London; ²Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research; ³School of Business and Management, Queen Mary University of London

1. Background

- ALUK asthma OHC hosted by HealthUnlocked, established for more than 15 years, professionally moderated.
- AD HOC Programme aims to establish, through a trial, whether engagement with the ALUK asthma OHC helps asthma patients to better self manage their symptoms.
- Around 250 patients (50 in feasibility study) to be signed up to the OHC. If successful, could potentially be rolled out to larger number of patients.

2. Aim

To explore how/whether new users recruited via AD HOC would impact current dynamics of the OHC, and its moderation.

3. Proposed methods

- Thematic analysis of OHC moderator interview transcripts from AD HOC Programme (Workstream 3b).
- Quantitative analysis of OHC engagement metrics.
- Next step: mixed-methods analysis of OHC dataset for duration of AD HOC feasibility study (approx. 6 months).*
- Next step: thematic and content analysis of public OHC posts (with participants tagged).*
- Next step: social network measures (e.g., centralities, brokerage, effective size, etc).*

4. Points for discussion

- Would users, superusers and moderators interact differently with AD HOC study participants as opposed to new users joining the OHC for their own reasons?
- Would study participants change any established dynamics?
- Would they make more work for the moderators and/or impact the effectiveness and/or safety of OHC engagement?

5. Preliminary findings

5.1. OHC user demographics

Data provided by HealthUnlocked for all users (n=19,940), as at 29.03.2023. Provision of demographic information is optional at sign up (none = not provided by user).

	Gender	Age (years)	Ethnicity	Country	
Female	5,508	18-24	153 White	3,490 UK	
Male	1,670	25-34	898 Asian	158 USA	
Other	35	35-44	1,176 Mixed	102 Australia	
None	12,272	45-54	1,434 Black	94 India	
		55-64	1,226 Other	109 Ireland	
		65-74	825 None	15,888 Canada	
		75-84	284	Other	974
		85+	40	None	7,883
		None	13,904		

5.2. OHC engagement metrics

Data provided by HealthUnlocked for the previous 12 months.

Month (data starts 1 st of month)	Total users	New users (joined this month)	Active users	New content (posts and replies)
Feb-2023	19,834	101	1,768	994
Jan-2023	19,740	109	1,837	957
Dec-2022	19,635	114	1,728	823
Nov-2022	19,527	98	1,709	594
Oct-2022	19,434	101	1,792	689
Sep-2022	19,336	98	1,916	576
Aug-2022	19,248	72	1,688	653
July-2022	19,187	86	1,765	836
Jun-2022	19,104	83	1,689	643
May-2022	19,026	95	1,781	597
Apr-2022	18,934	77	1,827	962
Mar-2022	18,862	94	1,839	708

5.3. Relevant insights from moderator interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with each of the six moderators of the ALUK Asthma OHC as part of the AD HOC Programme. Two pertinent themes were highlighted:

- Lack of time for moderation**
- Forum not currently being very busy/active**

...there's not a huge amount of traffic on our forum...
Moderator #3

It's a bit of a struggle if I'm honest, moderating it, because we're so busy with our other helpline nurse duties...
Moderator #5

I think there's definitely a chance that stuff's being missed...if the forum is exceptionally busy, it would be really easy to miss something.
Moderator #4

It's definitely been more active. I don't really know why it's so quiet at the moment.
Moderator #1

5.4. Moderation metrics

Data provided by HealthUnlocked showed that for the 12 months from Mar-2022 to Feb-2023, 33 posts were deleted and 7 were edited by the moderation team.

5. Initial conclusions and next steps

HealthUnlocked data suggest that 250 new users over a several-month recruitment period would not have a major impact on the OHC, in terms of volume of new users. Insights from the moderator interviews indicate that the moderators are short of time, despite the forum not being very busy/active. Next steps will be to look at the content of OHC posts, and social networks.

Acknowledgements We thank HealthUnlocked for providing the OHC user demographic data, and engagement and moderation metrics. We are very grateful to the moderators for giving their time to be interviewed for the AD HOC study.