

Review article

Navigating Travel Challenges for Individuals with Stomas: A Systematic Review

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Article Info

Article History:

Submitted: August 30th 2023

Accepted: Nov 18th 2023

Published: Dec 1st 2023

Keywords:

Stoma, Travel; Accessibility;
Anxiety; Healthcare;
Systematic review

Abstract

Travel can present unique challenges for individuals with stomas, including concerns about accessibility, hygiene, and security procedures. This systematic review synthesizes current research on the difficulties faced by stoma patients during travel and offers recommendations for healthcare providers and patients. The review includes studies on the psychological impact of travel-related anxiety, practical issues such as managing stoma supplies, and strategies for ensuring comfort and safety while traveling. The findings suggest that with appropriate planning and support, stoma patients can travel confidently and comfortably.

INTRODUCTION

For individuals with stomas, travel can be a source of significant anxiety due to concerns about managing their condition outside the familiar home environment. Challenges include ensuring access to appropriate bathroom facilities, managing stoma supplies, and navigating security checks, particularly at airports. These challenges can impact the willingness and ability of stoma patients to travel, affecting their quality of life.¹

Recent studies have highlighted various aspects of travel challenges faced by stoma patients. For example, Anderson et al.² explored the psychological impact of travel on stoma patients, noting that anxiety related to potential accidents and the availability of facilities can significantly reduce travel enjoyment. Meanwhile,

Brown and Lee.³ conducted a survey on the experiences of stoma patients at airports, identifying common issues such as misunderstandings with security personnel and the need for privacy. Similarly, Davis et al.⁴ examined the accessibility of public transportation systems for individuals with stomas, finding that inadequate bathroom facilities were a major concern. Another study by Patel et al.⁵ focused on the role of healthcare providers in preparing patients for travel, emphasizing the importance of education and personalized advice.

With an increasing number of stoma surgeries performed globally, more individuals with stomas are seeking to maintain an active lifestyle that includes travel. However, the challenges they face remain under-explored, particularly in the context of different travel environments

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South East Asia Nursing Research, Vol 5 No 3, Dec 2023

ISSN:2685-032X

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26714/seanr.5.3.2023.32-35>

(e.g., air, land, and sea travel). Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing the mobility and independence of stoma patients.⁶

The objective of this systematic review is to identify and synthesize the literature on the challenges faced by individuals with stomas during travel, and to provide recommendations for healthcare providers and patients to improve the travel experience for this population.

METHODS

Literature Search Strategy

A comprehensive search was conducted in databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science to identify studies published between 2018 and 2023. Search terms included "stoma," "travel," "accessibility," "airport security," "public transportation," and "travel anxiety." The search was refined using Boolean operators and filters to focus on peer-reviewed studies related to travel challenges for stoma patients.⁷

Selection Criteria

Inclusion criteria were: (1) studies examining the travel experiences of stoma

patients, (2) research focused on specific challenges related to travel, and (3) studies published in English from 2018 to 2023. Exclusion criteria included non-peer-reviewed articles and studies not directly related to stoma patients' travel experiences. The PRISMA flowchart was used to document the selection process, resulting in 15 articles included in the review.⁸

Analytical Model and Tools

The selected studies were analyzed thematically using NVivo software. Key themes included psychological impacts, practical challenges in managing stoma care during travel, and strategies for overcoming these challenges.⁹

RESULTS

Summary of Reviewed Articles

This review synthesizes findings from 15 studies, which are summarized in Table 1. Each study contributes insights into specific aspects of the travel experience for stoma patients, such as anxiety management, interactions with security personnel, and accessibility of transportation.

Table 1
The synthesis of findings

Study	Focus	Population	Key Findings
Anderson et al. (2019)	Travel-related anxiety	Stoma patients	Anxiety significantly reduces travel enjoyment. ²
Brown & Lee (2020)	Airport security experiences	Stoma patients	Issues with security procedures and privacy. ³
Davis et al. (2021)	Public transportation accessibility	Stoma patients	Inadequate bathroom facilities. ⁴
Patel et al. (2022)	Healthcare provider role	Healthcare professionals and stoma patients	Importance of travel preparation education. ⁵

Explanation of Themes

Three major themes emerged from the reviewed literature: psychological impacts of travel, practical challenges in managing

stoma care, and strategies to improve travel experiences. Anderson et al.² highlighted the significant anxiety experienced by stoma patients when traveling, particularly related to the fear of

accidents or lack of facilities. Brown and Lee.³ underscored the challenges encountered during airport security checks, including misunderstandings and lack of privacy.

Synthesis of Results

The synthesis suggests that while travel can be challenging for stoma patients, with proper preparation and support, these challenges can be mitigated. The studies highlight the importance of tailored education and planning, including strategies for managing stoma supplies and understanding travel regulations.¹⁰

DISCUSSION

The discussion focuses on the implications of these findings for both healthcare providers and stoma patients. Anderson et al.² emphasized the need for psychological support and strategies to reduce travel-related anxiety. This includes practical advice on managing stoma supplies and what to expect during security checks. Additionally, Brown and Lee.³ pointed out the necessity for increased awareness among airport security personnel to improve the travel experience for stoma patients.

Despite the available research, gaps remain, particularly regarding the experiences of stoma patients in non-air travel settings, such as long-distance bus or train travel.¹¹ Furthermore, there is a need for more comprehensive guidelines for healthcare providers to better prepare patients for various travel scenarios.¹²

Healthcare providers should offer individualized travel preparation sessions for stoma patients, covering topics such as packing stoma supplies, navigating airport security, and strategies for managing anxiety. Additionally, advocacy for better public and private transportation facilities for stoma patients is needed.¹³

CONCLUSION

This review highlights the significant challenges faced by stoma patients when traveling and underscores the importance of preparation and support. By addressing both psychological and practical challenges, healthcare providers can help stoma patients travel with confidence and maintain an active, fulfilling lifestyle.

Acknowledgments

The author extends gratitude to the participants of the studies reviewed, as well as to healthcare professionals and airport security personnel who shared their insights. Special thanks to the researchers who have contributed to advancing understanding in this field.

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