

Results

VOCGs were a significant source of support for people's wellbeing. This contribution was often considered significant in terms of the context and type of encounters they enabled in other terms than the ones provided by professionals in health care settings. Members valued highly the opportunity the organisations provided for sharing and being listened to by others, as well as giving a sense of purpose. The effects of the economic crisis were also being felt at this level and sometimes members saw their access to these organisations limited as a consequence.

Conclusions

VOCGs are playing a relevant role in people's self-management and perception of wellbeing. Health and other sectors should be aware of this and the opportunity that these organisations can constitute, also in the context of the current socioeconomic situation. Given the meaning and value that members attach to this kind of support, health professionals might need to reconsider their role, the place they occupy in the patients' network and their relative contribution to patients' wellbeing, as well as the implications this might have in terms of the nature of relationships between them, the patient, and other sectors.

Key messages

- VOCGs must be considered among the factors contributing significantly to self-management and wellbeing of people
- Health professionals should reconsider the place and nature of relationships they share with patients and their wider network in order to establish effective collaboration among them

Voluntary and community groups and health professionals contribution to selfmanagement and wellbeing

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Background

The burden of ageing societies, increasing prevalence of long term conditions and the accompanying challenge to the sustainability of health systems require the adoption of new strategies. In response to this, patients with chronic diseases are increasingly being made responsible for the management of their condition. Social support seems to play a significant role both in terms of the patient and the system, especially among people from deprived backgrounds.

Methods

We conducted personal interviews with representatives of Spanish voluntary and community groups (VOCGs) in the context of a European project involving six countries. Participants were purposefully selected.