

## **Evaluation of patient-centered counselling in Macedonian community pharmacies**

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### **Introduction**

Patient counselling has an important role in improving patients' self-management skills and better treatment outcome (Paterick et al., 2017). Educated patients become more engaged in health care decisions, are more compliant to adhere to medication guidelines and treatment plans, make lifestyle changes to manage chronic conditions, seek preventative services, and utilize medical services appropriately.

The lack of sufficient knowledge about their health status and medication is one of the most important factors associated with nonadherence and medication-related problems. Community pharmacists, as most easily accessible health professionals are an indispensable source of patient education and counselling in the context of pharmaceutical care. Therefore, community pharmacists should apply their specialized health and pharmacotherapeutic knowledge and offer medical counseling, everytime they dispense a prescription medication.

The aim of this study was to assess the contribution of community pharmacists' counselling to patients' knowledge about their prescription medicines.

### **Materials and methods**

This observational study used structured interviews with patients exiting randomly chosen community pharmacies. 150 patients picking up a prescription medicine were structurally interviewed leaving one of the 15 randomly chosen community pharmacies. The

medicines were randomly chosen. The interviews took place in May 2022.

For the purpose of this study, an anonymous questionnaire, previously developed and published by Horvat and Kos (2015) was used. The questionnaire was composed of 10 open-ended questions assessing patients' knowledge regarding the medicines: purpose, dose, application rate, timing, route of administration, duration of therapy and recognition of medication effectiveness, as well as questions regarding precautions and adverse effects. Each of these questions were followed by 3 close-ended questions which evaluated the pharmacists' contribution to their knowledge about a specific medication. All the questions were formulated in context to evaluation of the pharmacists' contribution about the previously defined aspects of medications use.

Additionally, the questionnaire included questions related to patient-specific data, including age, sex, education, income, patient's current number of prescription medicines, patient's view of current health status, patient's view of offered pharmacist counseling and treatment adherence.

The descriptive analysis was performed and the results were presented as percentage.

### **Results and discussion**

On the 1-5 rating scale (1 = poor, 5 = excellent), patients assessed their current health status with the median of 3.

Most of the patients were currently taking 2 drugs and they were aware of the purpose of the drug they used, dosing, treatment regimen and route of administration

(>95%). The majority of responders (74%) reported adherence to their treatment. High percentage of the patients were familiar with the therapy duration and knew how to recognize medication effectiveness (>65%). Only 45% were acquainted with the precautions and 35% were aware about the drug adverse effects.

Regarding the counselling obtained by the pharmacists during patients' last visit to the pharmacy, results showed that they were generally advised about the dose and treatment regimen (>75%). Around 20% of patients received information about drug possible adverse effects and how to minimize them. Only 8% stated that they were asked by the pharmacist if they had been previously informed about drug adverse effects. Pharmacists provided medication labels which usually contain information on dose and dosing interval for 67% of the patients. Other written information was rarely provided.

### Conclusion

According our results, patients considered themselves informed about how to use their medications, which is comparable to findings from similar published study (Horvat and Kos, 2015). However, patients are uncertain regarding possible drug associated adverse effects and side events. The obtained results emphasize the need for patient-centered pharmacists counselling towards medication safety profile.

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