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1 **Title**

2 Exploring the views of community pharmacists on patient feedback on their consultations

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7 **Introduction**

8 The last few decades have been associated with considerable expansion of community
9 pharmacists' (CPs) roles to more direct patient-centred care (1). Effective consultation skills
10 (CSs) are vital for enhancing pharmacist-patient interaction and are included in professional
11 standards (2). Several resources are offered to pharmacists to enhance their CSs (3, 4).

12 Under the patient-centred care concept, patients should be actively involved in their own care.
13 Collecting patient feedback on pharmacy services is one way of ensuring patients' voices are
14 heard and could promote patient-focused service delivery. Several practitioners already gather
15 patient feedback on their CSs which helps them in identifying areas for improvement such as
16 consultation duration and explanations given to patients (5). However, this is less established
17 with pharmacists. Therefore, this study aimed to explore CPs' views on patient feedback on
18 their consultations.

19

20 **Methods**

21 This exploratory study was conducted with a national pharmacy multiple with branches in the
22 East of England between October-December 2019. CPs employed by the pharmacy were
23 eligible to participate. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of East Anglia.

24 Invitations and consent forms were sent to pharmacists (n=12) via a gatekeeper from the
25 multiple. Consented pharmacists were invited to a telephone/face-to-face semi-structured
26 interview and were provided with an example of a doctor's validated and reliable patient
27 feedback questionnaire and feedback report. An interview topic guide was developed by
28 reviewing literature and following discussion with the research team (**Error! Reference source**
29 **not found.**). Interviews were audio-recorded and thematically analysed by a researcher (HA)
30 using NVivo-11 software (6). Coded transcripts were checked by another researcher (TK) to
31 ensure consistent coding and to agree on final themes.

32

33 **Results**

34 Six female pharmacists consented and were interviewed. Their experience ranged between 4-
35 26 years. Four overarching themes emerged.

36

37 **Theme-1: conducting consultations in the community pharmacy**

38 Pharmacists reported some challenges with consultations including increased workload and
39 time constraints, yet, described that consultations helped in building rapport with patients.
40 Some pharmacists highlighted the role of experience in developing their CSs.

41

42 **Theme-2: views and benefits of patient feedback**

43 Pharmacists reported not yet receiving CSs' specific feedback but welcomed patient feedback
44 due to perceived benefits on improving their consultations. Pharmacist also felt that reflection
45 on feedback could form part of their professional development and could inform useful
46 discussions with colleagues.

47 *"I would definitely do a CPD cycle on it, I could potentially involve it in...a peer discussion,*
48 *and then regularly review it, to ensure I am not going back to my previous practice" P1*

49

50 **Theme-3: views on feedback report**

51 The example feedback report was found acceptable to use in community pharmacy. However,
52 pharmacists suggested amending it by providing a summary, using colours/charts, clearly
53 highlighting areas needing improvement, and providing resources/suggestions to direct
54 improvement (e.g. links to online courses).

55

56 **Theme-4: suggestions for future feedback**

57 Pharmacists highlighted challenges with collecting feedback including collection methods, bias,
58 and time constraints. Suggestions to overcome these challenges included notifying patients in
59 advance of the method used and getting a sufficient number of patients to receive reliable
60 feedback. Additionally, collecting feedback soon after the consultation, using a third person,
61 encouraging patients to give honest responses, using anonymised surveys, and allowing
62 patients to give feedback at their own time were also mentioned. Pharmacists felt that
63 feedback could be collected at least annually as this would be more acceptable to patients.

64 *"...if there was like an online form or something that patients could go to afterwards...I*
65 *think that would be probably more effective than trying to do it there and then before*
66 *they've even left the building" P3*

67 Finally, pharmacists suggested being observed by their peers to get their feedback and to
68 obtain different perspectives on how to improve their consultations.

69

70 **Discussion**

71 This is the first study exploring CPs' views on patient feedback on their CSs. Pharmacists
72 welcomed receiving patient feedback and that it has many advantages to their practice. There
73 are, however, several limitations including recruiting a small sample size in one geographical
74 area and in one multiple pharmacy, and not reaching data saturation. However, this study
75 supports the development of a new avenue to enhance CSs of CPs.

76 Pharmacists reported that consultations are essential to their professional development yet
77 described increased workload amongst other challenges. This is not surprising given that an
78 average community pharmacy has about 37000 patient visit each year(7). Although the

79 accessibility of community pharmacies is one of its greatest assets, together with role
80 expansion, it has contributed to increasing workload (8).

81 With respect to improving CSs, experience remains an important determinant for building
82 pharmacists' confidence. This supports the findings of another study that described CPs'
83 experience and patient feedback as important factors for improving CSs (9). Pharmacists agreed
84 that this feedback would be beneficial to their professional development. Such benefits have
85 been highlighted by other studies where practitioners used patient feedback to inform peer
86 discussions and develop their CSs (5, 10). Pharmacists also suggested collecting feedback from
87 peers as they could uncover things potentially not identified by others. Although collecting
88 patient and peer feedback is not mandatory in pharmacy revalidation, it could form part of the
89 annually submitted records.

90 The example report was generally acceptable, however, pharmacists gave recommendations
91 similar to those highlighted by hospital pharmacists to make it more pharmacy relevant (10).
92 Using pictorial data in feedback reports is encouraged to facilitate its understanding.

93 As for feedback collection methods, pharmacists highlighted the importance of identifying the
94 most appropriate method to use. However, using multiple methods and allowing patients to
95 select the most convenient method(s) may resolve potential future challenges (e.g. time
96 constraints and biased responses) and could encourage more participation.

97 **Conclusion**

98 Patient feedback on consultations was well received and perceived to be useful by participating
99 CPs to improving their consultations. Further research is needed to identify feedback collection
100 methods to implement in this setting.

101

102 **Declarations**

103 **Conflict of interest**

104 None.

105

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108 not-for-profit sectors.

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110 Table 1 Topic guide summary

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1. Experience with conducting patient consultations
 2. Experience with receiving feedback on consultations
 3. Views on receiving patient feedback
 4. Views on example patient feedback questionnaire and report
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