Feeding Back Pharmacy Staff on their OTC Dispensing Performance: an Exploratory Study

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Introduction

Pharmacies are often the first port of call for consumers with minor illness. However, the literature shows that pharmacies performance in the supply of OTC is suboptimal [1]. Little is known about the reasons underlying suboptimal performance.

Aim

This paper, which is part of a larger study, reports pharmacy staff’s perspectives on simulated patient visits involving the supply of OTC medicines.

Design & Methods

10 validated simulated patients visits

Mean Technical Performance Score = 50.4%
Mean Interpersonal Performance Score = 77.7%
Symptom-based Scenarios = 63.2%
Product-based Scenarios = 31.3%

Semi-structured Interviews:

Inadequate patient evaluation and counselling were found during the simulated patient and results were feedback to participants. Most participants expressed disappointment about unmet standards and provided justifications for their suboptimal performance.

Reasons included:

• Perceiving some questions as irrelevant;
• Believing the person was already informed;
• Considering counselling for cold medicines unnecessary (as they are commonly used);
• Believing written instructions are unnecessary if the consumer had been informed orally;
• Discomfort in questioning and counselling consumers seeking emergency contraception.

Data analysis indicated that staff centered their behaviors on beliefs, perceptions and past experiences rather than factual knowledge.

Conclusion

Our study suggests that pharmacy staff needs to be encouraged to engage in effective communication with consumers, to ascertain their needs and wishes pertaining to OTC medicines. A larger study is warranted to confirm our findings.

References: