

WHAT IS YOUR UNDERSTANDING ABOUT PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES? ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTION OF DISPENSERS IN A MUNICIPALITY IN THE STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO

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Introduction

Pharmaceutical Services (PS) plays a fundamental role in health care services, which is achieved only when patients have access to medicines. "Access" means having the "appropriate product for a specific purpose, in the correct dose, for the necessary time, in the required time and place, with quality assurance and sufficient information for use"¹. PS is organized through a set of coordinated actions known as the PS Cycle². This cycle encompasses everything from the selection and acquisition of medicines to ensuring their rational use. Effective PS is essential for achieving positive health outcomes and improving the performance of health systems, contributing to universal health care access. In this context, the present study analyzed the understanding of SP among professionals enrolled in dispensing medicines in pharmacies of the public health service in Niterói, RJ.

Material and Methods

The study was carried out in 2023, in public health services in Niterói, RJ. This included Primary Health facilities, Hospitals and Mental Health facilities. Ten researchers, comprising undergraduate and postgraduate students from the Faculty of Pharmacy at Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), were organized into pairs and distributed across the municipality's five administrative regions: Praias da Baía, Norte, Oceânica, Pendotiba, and Leste. Following a pre-established script, the researchers administered questionnaires directly to dispensers in the units. Data analysis was based on the question: "What is your understanding of Pharmaceutical Services?" This allowed for the identification and assessment of the dispensers' knowledge on the topic. Responses were recorded and the audio transcribed for content analysis. The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the UFF Faculty of Medicine.

Results and Discussion

Data were collected from 60 professionals enrolled in dispensing medicines, including 18 pharmacists (30%), 22 nurses (36.7%), 4 pharmacy assistants (6.7%), 3 nursing technicians (5%), 7 nursing assistants (11.7%), and 6 from other professions such as dentists, administrative assistants, physiotherapists, and doctors (10%). Respondents worked in various units: 48 in Primary Health facilities (80%), 6 in Hospitals (10%), 4 in Mental Health facilities (6.7%) and 2 in emergency units (3.3%). The regional distribution included 22 from the Norte (36.7%), 13 from the Oceânica (21.7%), 16 from Praias da Baía (26.7%), 8 from Pendotiba (13.3%), and 1 from the Leste (1.7%). Of the 60 professionals interviewed, 46 (76.7%) provided answers about their understanding of PS. Data analysis revealed a diversity of perspectives on PS, varying by position. Most professionals view PS as guiding patients on the correct use of medicines, emphasizing the importance of rational use, adherence to treatment, and safety. Pharmacists tend to have a broader view, including managerial and clinical aspects like the selection, storage, and dispensing of medicines, while nursing professionals and assistants focus on basic patient guidance. Challenges to effective PS included work overload and lack of human resources. Recurring issues included pharmacists working alone or the absence of professionals in some units. Despite recognizing the importance of PS, some professionals have limited knowledge about its role in the care cycle, often associating it only with dispensing medicines.

In general, PS is recognized as essential for ensuring access to and rational use of medicines. However, its implementation is hindered by structural factors such as a lack of human resources.

Conclusion

The research reveals diverse perspectives on what PS entails, varying by profession and training. Pharmacists have a comprehensive view, encompassing administrative and clinical aspects, while nurses and assistants focus on basic patient guidance. Challenges such as work overload and lack of human resources were frequently mentioned, highlighting obstacles to the effective implementation of PS.

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