PHARMACY SERVICES PERFORMANCE AS A BASIS FOR BUILDING CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT COGNITIVE SERVICES

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Background Implementation of new cognitive services is a demanding process, influenced by different barriers and facilitators. In order to successfully address these challenges, structure and process assessment is needed to build capacity for sustainable delivery of new services.

Purpose The aim of the study was to evaluate pharmacy services performance in Slovenia before the implementation of cognitive services, with a focus on pharmacy network and its work load as well as patient characteristics.

Method We performed a cross-sectional study by using health claims data on prescription medicines for the year 2013. Data on medicines prescribed in ambulatory care settings were obtained from the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia. For the data analysis we developed appropriate procedures using the IBM SPSS Statistics v22.

Findings In 2013 there were 326 pharmacy units (1 pharmacy per 6.316 inhabitants), of which 69% were public and 31% private. In total, pharmacies dispensed 15.950.757 prescription medicines to 1.471.783 patients during 8.116.596 pharmacy visits. In average each pharmacy yearly dispensed 48.928 prescriptions with considerable differences between pharmacies. Eleven pharmacies dispensed more than 150.000 prescriptions (maximum number 232.818).The largest numbers of prescription medicines were dispensed on Wednesdays and in the months between January and April. In 2013 there was in average one pharmacist per 1.879 inhabitants. In average each pharmacy unit had 3 dispensing pharmacists, each dispensing 63 prescriptions daily. In average a pharmacy unit received prescriptions from 863 different doctors and 8.956 different patients. The average age of patients was 45 years and majority were female (56%). However, large variations in patient characteristics were found with a difference in average age of 10 years or more comparing different pharmacy units. An average patient yearly received almost 5 different medicines (4.76) prescribed on 10.8 prescriptions. However, patients aged 82-89 years received more than 25 prescriptions yearly. Most of the patients (75%) visited only one or two pharmacies to get prescription medicines. However, approximately a quarter of patients were dispensed medicines in at least 3 different pharmacy units, which indicates decline of loyalty compared to the data from 2001.

Conclusion Pharmacists in Slovenia dispense a large number of prescriptions, what can cause work overload by core activities and may prevent pharmacists to offer cognitive services to patients. When planning the implementation of cognitive services pharmacies should take into account different characteristics of patients who visit them and schedule the appointments to the start or end of the week.