Pharmaceutical counselling on anticoagulation? Identifying needs of German community pharmacies

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Background The role of the community pharmacist evolves from dispensing to counselling, taking into account prescription and non-prescription drugs. Pharmaceutical counselling is especially important with anticoagulation drugs that need an optimal adherence in order to give benefit to the patients.

Purpose This survey is the German arm of an international survey conducted by the international pharmaceutical anticoagulation care task force (iPACT). The purpose is to identify the educational needs of the pharmaceutical care team in German community pharmacies assessed by reported self-confidence when advising patients on anticoagulants.

Method In October and November 2016 we conducted a multiple-choice survey with pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in Germany. Data were collected anonymously live and online. In the first part of the survey, demographic data were collected. The second part dealt with the self-confidence of the participants when counselling patients on direct acting oral anticoagulants (DOAC), low molecular weight heparins (LMWH), and vitamin K antagonists (VKA), the references they used, their willingness to receive additional education on specific anticoagulation topics and the form of the training as well as the support needed.

Findings A total of 279 questionnaires were completed (206 pharmacists, 69 pharmacy technicians and three others). 259 participants worked in community pharmacy. 57% (118) of the pharmacists felt very confident or confident to counsel patients receiving DOACs, 65,7% (136) with LMWH and 79,6% (144) in the case of VKA. Answers from pharmacy technicians (PT) differed as follows: Very confident or confident with DOACs 28,6% (20), LMWH 65,7% (50) and VKA 52,8% (37). In both groups, most insecurity was seen in ?monitoring INR/making recommendations on these values? (Pharmacists: 26,8%, PT 45,7%) and ?management of bridging/switching anticoagulants? (Pharmacists: 14%, PT: 28,6%). Main focus of interest for further education were interactions and their management (Pharmacists: 50,2%, PT: 32,9%). Participants use information from pharmaceutical industry as a reference (Pharmacists: 70%, PT: 55,7%), followed by internet and pharmacy software. Both groups prefer seminars/symposia and personalized e-learnings as educational form and would find a list of frequently asked questions supportive. 79,7% (165) pharmacists and 71,4% (50) technicians reported that information should be accessible from the pharmacy software.

Conclusion Based on these findings, different approaches should be considered for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in order to provide a comprehensive, practice-based education addressing their individual needs. Following any education live or per e-learning, content should be made accessible through the pharmacy software in order to assure sustainability.