Experiences of the service providers with running a randomised controlled trial on Medicines Use Review service in Slovenia

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Background Randomised controlled trial (RCT) is considered a gold standard to gather quality evidence. However, several challenges are met when the design is used in practice, especially for the first time.

Purpose To describe experiences of Medicines Use Review (MUR) providers during a RCT on MUR benefits in Slovenia.

Method A RCT consisting of two visits to compare MUR to standard care in Slovenia was performed. MUR was provided by certified pharmacists who enrolled patients and performed MUR for the test group at the first visit. Afterwards, pharmacists were invited to participate in an online survey gathering their experiences with performing a RCT in practice. Open-ended questions were used to examine positive and negative experiences with the study regarding the pharmacy, patients and study coordination. Overall evaluation of each section was graded on a 5-point scale (1=very poor, 5=very good). Data was descriptively analysed. In depth qualitative analysis will follow.

Findings 22 out of 32 MUR providers participating in the RCT responded to the survey (69 % response rate). 74 % were female and 65 % were between 31 and 50 years old. Before the study they performed 1-2 MURs a month on average within the regular practice. RCT was facilitated by involvement of entire pharmacy team in recruiting eligible patients, good communication and flexibility of study coordinators and interviewers. An important facilitator was also the possibility of promoting MUR through the research and cooperation with academia. However, identification of eligible patients was challenging due to lack of resources (time, staff, use of vacation days). In their opinion the enrolment period should have been longer and in more suitable time of the year. Additionally, more MUR providers would lower the pressure to achieve targeted sample size. In general, patients were kind and responsive at the invitation part, although further motivation to participate did not always follow. A major barrier was also patients’ poor understanding of all study requirements (2 visits, bringing all medications to the pharmacy for pill count ?). Nevertheless, overall experience regarding the pharmacy, patients, study coordination before the study and study coordination during the study scored 3.8, 3.6, 4.2 and 4.5 points, respectively. 82 % respondents would decide to participate in this type of study again.

Conclusion A RCT represented a novel study design in Slovenian pharmacy practice. Although some challenges were met, the overall experience shows a positive attitude and readiness to use this design in the future.