

# Study of pharmacists' attitude and willingness to provide additional services in Bulgaria

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**Background** The pharmacists in Bulgaria are the most accessible healthcare professionals. Patients might visit their pharmacists for an advice, to share problems and to receive professional and comprehensible consultation and advice for medicines, health, prophylaxis, life style and well-being.

**Purpose** The main aim of this research is to summarize and analyze the willingness of Bulgarian pharmacists to provide additional pharmaceutical and healthcare services in the pharmacy. The readiness of pharmacists to participate in life-long learning in order to develop their knowledge and skills is researched as well.

**Method** A cross-sectional study among pharmacists in Bulgaria was conducted in 2018. An internet-based questionnaire with customized 15 questions was sent to the members of the Bulgarian Pharmaceutical Union that practicing in a community pharmacy (n=5165). The responds rate was 4-5% as we obtained 233 filled questionnaires. To identify the attitude and willingness to provide additional services in the pharmacy (blood pressure and blood sugar measurement, execution of additional medical manipulations etc.) we considered and analyzed additional characteristics of the sample (sub-population)- like age, working experience, acquired post-graduate specialty, etc. Data were analyzed with SPSS v.24.0. Descriptive statistics were applied.

**Findings** The results showed that 52% of the pharmacists provided at least one additional service in pharmacy but only 14% provided blood sugar measurement. Still 67% of respondents believed that patients would admire introduction of additional services in pharmacies as this perception varies according to work experience. The need to introduction of additional services in pharmacy was determined by the profile of the served patients ? almost 50% of elderly people with an average number of 3 (Me, 1÷5) diseases by patient. Almost every pharmacist worked with hypertensive patients (97.9%), 86.7% with diabetes and 54.9% with CORD. Most pharmacists worked with regular patients ? 72.1% of the respondents reply that 40% or more of their patients visited regularly the given pharmacy, and 39.5% assessed more than 60% of their customers as loyal. 80.3% of respondents showed very positive attitude toward participation in additional training courses for acquiring new competences. 84.5% of female pharmacists had a positive attitude versus 67.8% of male respondents (p=0,005).

**Conclusion** The study shows pharmacists attitude to additional services as part of pharmaceutical care concept and their readiness to professional development. Pharmacists in Bulgaria are willing to implement new services in the pharmacy, but they expect to be introduced additional payment for them. This could be future priority for Bulgarian Pharmaceutical Union.