

Cooperation between municipalities and pharmacies on local health promotion

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Background There is a lack of knowledge on how pharmacies can cooperate with municipalities on health promotion. There seems to be an unutilized potential for linking pharmacies more closely to the rest of the health system for the benefit of the citizen.

Purpose To evaluate a cooperation model between municipalities and pharmacies to provide health promotion to vulnerable citizens.

Method A cooperation model for delivering health promotion and disease prevention was developed using a user driven approach between five municipalities and six pharmacies in Denmark and subsequently practiced in real life settings for three months. Telephone meetings were provided every fortnight to support the cooperation. A realistic evaluation comprising four context-mechanism-outcome configurations directed the evaluation of the cooperation model. At the end of the study, all municipalities (n=13) and pharmacies (n=12) answered a survey to evaluate the cooperation model. Three municipalities (n= 8) and three pharmacies (n=7) participated in three focus group interviews.

Findings The parties recruited 54 citizens (female=63%, mean age 63.5 years) who needed healthcare services in relation to type 2 diabetes, smoking cessation sessions, chronic pain management, and New Medicine Service. The citizens were primarily recruited in pharmacy settings (82%) vs. municipality settings (18%). The healthcare services were primarily provided in municipality settings (68%) vs. pharmacy settings (32%). Three main themes were identified: 1) Ready to start the cooperation. 2) The cooperation has been an eye opener ? we can utilize each other for the benefit of our citizens. 3) It makes sense to continue the cooperation. Pharmacies and municipalities became aware of each other's services and how these complement each other for the benefit of the citizens. It is possible for municipalities and pharmacies to cooperate on delivering health care services to vulnerable citizens. The use of agreement sheets and action plans played a big role in both starting the cooperation and making relations and was essential throughout the study period.

Conclusion Municipalities and pharmacies have started a partnership in delivering health promotion services. Pharmacies and municipalities regard themselves as an extension of the healthcare system. Pharmacies are a new entrance gate to reach citizens that are otherwise rarely reached by municipalities. The citizens experience more continuity in health services when pharmacies and municipalities cooperate. The parties wish to continue their cooperation.