Are <u>we</u> Sustainable? 4CPS-231

A baseline questionnaire to GHP members regarding pharmacy practice across the UK

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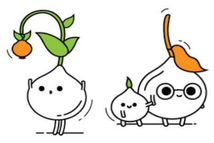
Background

We (*you, me, and all our patients*) are on course for a global temperature rise which will see millions of people displaced, injured or dying through rising sea levels, starvation and disease by the end of this century. The head of the UK environment agency has warned that in less than years, (by 2035), water shortages in the UK will pose a threat to life.

The health costs are projected to be extraordinary. The NHS is the largest public sector contributor to carbon emissions (25% pre COVID) which is 5.4% of total UK emissions. Pharmacy as a department, as well as medicines and medicinal products, create waste and pollution. The COVID pandemic and the relentless consumption of PPE has escalated this issue. We must strive towards reducing waste, and ultimately pollution, in order to increase sustainability both for our patients, and for global health. Ahead of COP26 in Glasgow this year, the Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists (GHP) were keen to discover our members views on Sustainability, and our role in the future.

Aim

To establish the baseline understanding of qualified pharmacists across the UK with regard to the health risks of a climate crisis, as well as the impact of pharmacy on the environment.



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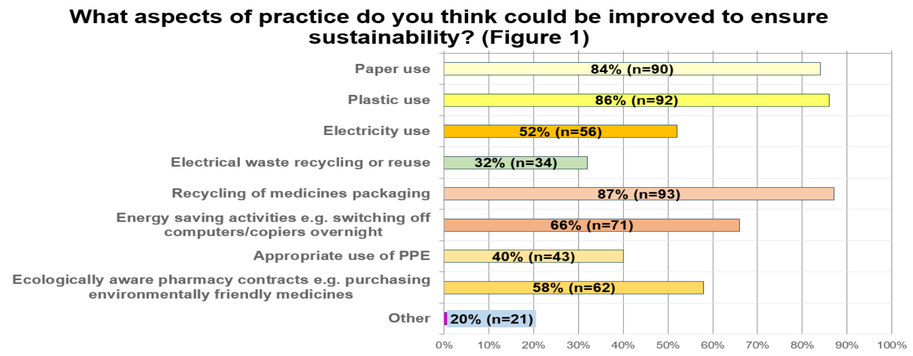
Method

In July 2021, we invited all GHP members (n=4,788) to complete a short survey to gauge their understanding of the role of pharmacy in the promotion of a sustainable approach to healthcare. All members in the UK were emailed a link to a ten item survey in Webropol® and invited to complete this by the end of August 2021. The results were analysed using descriptive statistics. Free text comments were analysed using thematic analysis. No completion incentives were offered. Ethical approval was not required for this study.

Results and discussion

One hundred and seven GHP members responded to the survey (2.23% response rate), and were more likely to be band 8a or above (83%). Ninety-four percent (n=100) of respondents believed that there were aspects of pharmacy practice which were wasteful, with respondents choosing a range of areas where pharmacy practice could be more sustainable (*Figure 1*). Twenty percent of respondents added additional comments including; sustainable prescribing and deprescribing, raising awareness and penalties for poor practice.

What aspects of practice do you think could be improved to ensure sustainability? (Figure 1)



Results and discussion

Seventy-nine percent (n=85) respondents added their suggestions to the question "*What changes would improve sustainability in Pharmacy?*" (*Figure 2*) including national leadership, recycling schemes for e.g. inhalers and PPE, as well as a review of work and travel policies. A local champion in your department was also a common suggestion. Sixty-five percent (n=70) of respondents provided suggestions on how the proposed changes could be measured (*Figure 3*), such as measuring the carbon footprint of your organisation, creating energy and waste logs etc.

What changes do you think would help to improve Sustainability in Pharmacy? (Figure 2)

Key recommendations
Recycling schemes
Raising awareness
League tables & incentives for environmentally friendly choices / actions
Smarter electronics
Waste-free or reduction in waste in our daily practice
Review work & travel policies
Action by Big Pharma e.g. details of carbon footprint
Sustainable procurement practices
Invest in staff & infrastructure
National leadership & guidance

Number of comments: 85

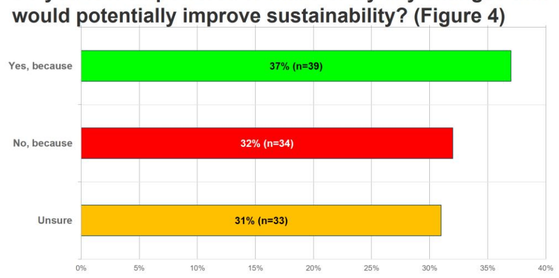
How could this be measured? (Figure 3)

Key reasons
Waste logs including costings
Medication consumption including spend
Carbon footprint of the organisation
Energy consumption
Miles travelled per staff per annum

Number of comments: 70

Despite 94% of respondents believing that aspects of practice were wasteful, only 37% (n=39) felt empowered to make change in their organisation (*Figure 4*). Fifty-eight respondents (54%) provided free text comments – key themes for those who did not feel empowered were; not holding the budget, lack of local or national leadership in this area (*Figure 5*).

Do you feel empowered to make or try any changes that would potentially improve sustainability? (Figure 4)



Number of respondents: 106

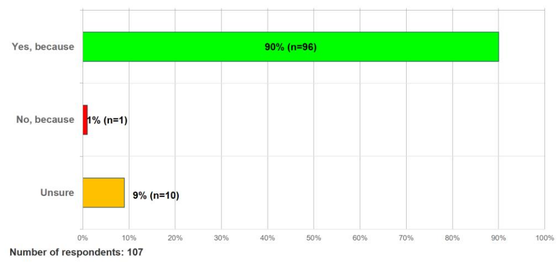
Do you feel empowered to make or try any changes that would potentially improve sustainability? (Figure 5)

Key reasons		
Yes	Unsure	No
Moral duty	Lack of leadership	Don't control the budget
Environmental crisis	Lack of influence beyond own team	Too much red tape
		Lack of Senior support
		Lack of Team engagement

Number of comments: 58

When asked about whether they believed an increased focus on Sustainability was required from an Organisational or Management perspective, 90% (n=96) believed that this was necessary in their organisation (*Figure 6*). Key themes from the 97 comments on this questions included conflicting views on funding – some believed it would save money, others that it would require investment, a need for National guidance. Respondents also believed that leadership was required at all levels of practice to make change happen (Figure 7).

Do you think there should be a greater focus on sustainability from an organisational or management perspective? (Figure 6)



Number of respondents: 107

Do you think there should be a greater focus on sustainability from an organisational or management perspective? (Figure 7)

Key reasons
Would save money
Would require investment
It is a climate emergency
Variation across workplaces re emphasis on recycling / energy saving initatives
Need National Guidance to drive change
Leadership required at ALL levels of Pharmacy
Higher profile would raise awareness and improve engagement

Number of comments: 97

Conclusions and next steps

Survey respondents believe that aspects of pharmacy practice are not Sustainable, however most do not feel empowered to make change. There is a need for National guidance to support changes in practice, and for local champions and leadership at all levels to ensure that Sustainability can be Sustainable. Since this survey was completed, the GHP have appointed a Chair and Vice Chair for Sustainability. We will work with colleagues across the UK, Europe and globally to improve practice in pharmacy and medicines use.

Want to get involved? Get in touch on Twitter @roisohare.