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1. Background:

Competent communication is not only vital in daily human interaction but is also an essential component in the exchange of information between healthcare professionals — including pharmacists — and their patients. Proper auditory function is a key sensory mechanism underpinning effective communication throughout all stages of life.

2. Aim:

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate, based on the results of a prospective, anonymous questionnaire-based survey, the communication competencies of pharmacists in interactions with patients experiencing varying degrees of hearing impairment.

3. Research design and methods:

This study was approved by the appropriate bioethics committee. It was designed as a prospective, anonymous, questionnaire-based survey conducted among 130 pharmacists. The survey targeted pharmacists employed in community pharmacies and was administered both electronically and in printed form. The questionnaire, was distributed as a printed document for manual completion as well as an interactive online form. The survey consisted of 19 questions, of which 18 were closed-ended and one was open-ended.

In your professional training to date, do you believe you have been adequately prepared to interact with hearing-impaired patients?

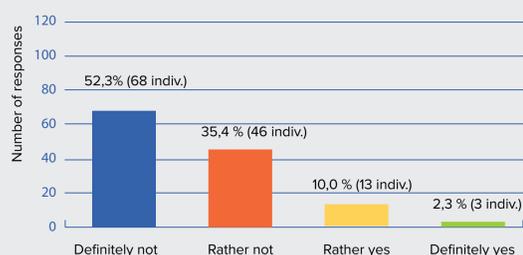


Figure 1. Questionnaire addressed to pharmacists working in a public pharmacy: In your professional training to date, do you believe you have been adequately prepared to interact with hearing-impaired patients?

How do you assess the level of understanding of the information you convey to hearing-impaired patients?

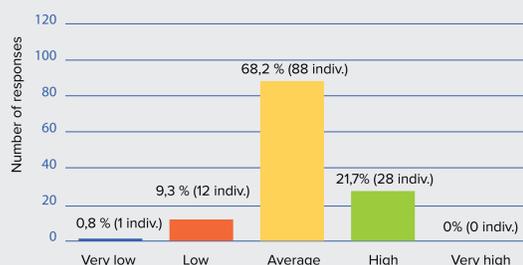


Figure 2. Questionnaire addressed to pharmacists working in a public pharmacy: How do you assess the level of understanding of the information you convey to hearing-impaired patients?

Are communication-facilitating tools (e.g., printed materials, induction loop system - sound amplifier) dedicated to hearing-impaired individuals used in the pharmacy where you work?

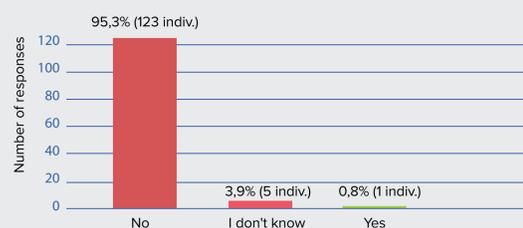


Figure 3. Questionnaire addressed to pharmacists working in a public pharmacy: Are communication-facilitating tools (e.g., printed materials, induction loop system - sound amplifier) dedicated to hearing-impaired individuals used in the pharmacy where you work?

How do you assess the availability and quality of training concerning communication with patients who have special hearing needs in the pharmacy where you work?

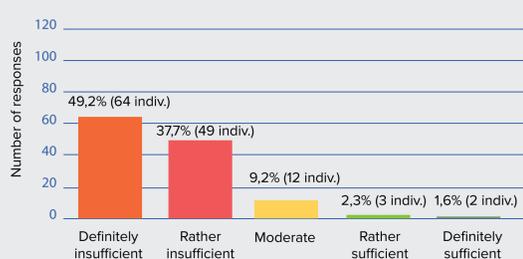


Figure 4. Questionnaire addressed to pharmacists working in a public pharmacy: How do you assess the availability and quality of training concerning communication with patients who have special hearing needs in the pharmacy where you work?

Do you think information about adverse reactions affecting hearing should be emphasized more in materials available in the pharmacy?

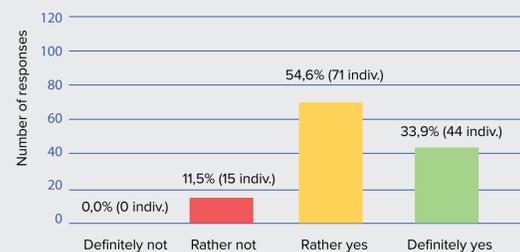


Figure 5. Questionnaire addressed to pharmacists working in a public pharmacy: Do you think information about adverse reactions affecting hearing should be emphasized more in materials available in the pharmacy?

Which of the listed medications have potential ototoxic effects? (multiple choice)

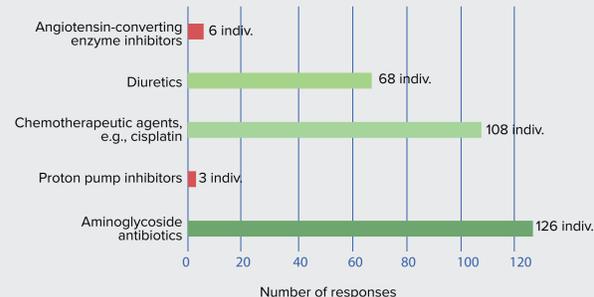


Figure 6. Questionnaire addressed to pharmacists working in a public pharmacy: Which of the listed medications have potential ototoxic effects? (multiple choice)

Do you inform patients about the potential negative effects of medication impacting their hearing?

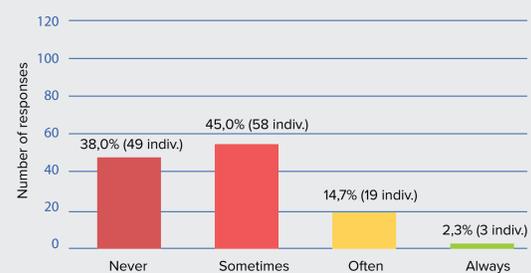


Figure 7. Questionnaire addressed to pharmacists working in a public pharmacy: Do you inform patients about the potential negative effects of medication impacting their hearing?

4. Results:

The first group of questions addressed pharmacists' communication skills. The second group pertained to adverse drug reactions associated with ototoxicity and to patient populations at increased risk of developing hearing loss. The third group focused on resources (including training) and technological tools that facilitate communication with individuals with hearing impairments. Analysis of responses from the 130 pharmacists revealed that the majority (52.31%) believed their previous training had not adequately prepared them to work with patients experiencing hearing loss. One-third of respondents indicated that information regarding adverse drug reactions affecting hearing should be more prominently emphasized in patient-facing educational materials provided within pharmacies. This finding underscores the need for enhanced inclusion of such information in materials related to medications with ototoxic effects and improved adaptation to the specific needs of hearing-impaired patients. 49.23% of respondents rated their ability to convey information to hearing-impaired patients as average, while 28.46% assessed their competencies as poor.

5. Conclusion:

The findings suggest that pharmacists perceive their communication skills with hearing-impaired patients as insufficient. Nevertheless, they are generally able to identify medicinal products with potential ototoxic effects and recognize patient groups in which underlying health conditions may elevate the risk of hearing loss. Deficits in training, education (particularly regarding communication strategies), and the availability of supportive materials and technologies are perceived as major obstacles to effective communication with hearing-impaired patients.



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