



HeLP: Health Literacy in Pharmacy project

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Abstract

Evidence from published research suggests that the concept of **health literacy** has gained little traction in community pharmacy practice, despite the daily involvement of pharmacy staff with consumers who may have limited understanding of their medicines or the healthcare system, and limited ability to navigate through these challenges.

This project aimed to design, develop, implement and evaluate a health literacy educational package for community pharmacy staff in Australia. After extensive literature review and consultation, a Universal Precautions approach was developed. Simply put this means engaging with a consumer assuming they have limited Health Literacy until there are indications otherwise. The package was then developed with this central theme to enhance provision of information to pharmacy consumers.

A randomised controlled trial was conducted from May to November 2013 to evaluate the uptake and implementation of the educational package. In total, 77 pharmacies were recruited across three states in Australia. Pharmacies either received the training face-to-face, by electronic means, or were allocated to a control group. Key elements of the training (collectively, the Universal Precautions approach) were monitored before and after the training using simulated patients, researcher observation and consumer recall following consultations. Pharmacists and pharmacy staff members were also surveyed before and after the training regarding their attitudes and motivations towards health literacy training, and a survey of the 'health-literacy friendliness' of the pharmacy environment was undertaken. Finally, feedback on the training and its implementation was obtained via focus groups or interviews.

The educational package was effective in improving some aspects of communication by pharmacists and pharmacy staff with consumers, but also highlights the relative difficulty in attempting to make changes to practice behaviours, particularly in relation to communication techniques. The study provided scope for the refinement of the educational package, which is available for wider implementation.



Research & Development

ABSTRACT