



Exploring the role of community pharmacy in supporting mental health consumers and carers

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Abstract

Background: Around 45% of Australian adults experience conditions such as depression or anxiety during their lifetime. While pharmacy staff members are well positioned to assist mental health consumers with medication-related issues they may lack the requisite knowledge, skills, competence and confidence.

Objective: To explore pharmacy's role in supporting mental health consumers and their carers by developing an education program for staff and trialling strategies that assist consumers in managing their medication.

Methods: Stage One included a literature review and stakeholder consultation (n=98) to identify the educational needs of pharmacy staff. In Stage Two, online mental health education was developed, completed by 566 staff and evaluated with pre- and post-training questionnaires and consumer exit interviews. Stage Three trialled a medication support service throughout 100 community pharmacies (n=163 staff trained in workshops) recruiting 418 consumers. Service impact was assessed using a pre-post study design to examine the effectiveness, experiences with and acceptance of this strategy.

Results: On-line education including consumer narratives, role-plays and case studies was effective in improving the attitudes, knowledge, communication skills and confidence of pharmacy staff for providing patient centred care to mental health consumers and carers. Stage Three workshops focussed on higher-level communication skills, practical information and behaviour change strategies. The multifaceted intervention positively impacted on pharmacy relationships with consumers and achievement of medication-related and health-oriented goals. Consumers reported high satisfaction, improved adherence, increased motivation and confidence in regard to dealing with their mental health problems.

Conclusion: Trained pharmacy staff can effectively provide medication support services to consumers. Education needs to incorporate the needs of consumers and their carers, as well as target specific and relevant gaps in knowledge and skills. A community pharmacy mental health medication support service that is ongoing, goal-oriented, flexible and individualised, improves consumer outcomes. Community pharmacy is in an ideal position to empower consumers and carers through information, support and connection to relevant health and community services.



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ABSTRACT