An Investigation of the Determinants for Community Pharmacists' Positive Image and the Needs for Community Pharmacists' Services in Taiwan: A Cross-Sectional Study

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BACKGROUND

- Community pharmacists are the easiest to access by the public and form the basic public image of all pharmacists.
- In the literature, there have been relatively few studies of the public’s general perception or views of community pharmacists, left alone the factors that help build their positive image.
- In Taiwan, a large-scale national survey of over 1,000 respondents concluded that consumers had less-than-positive perceptions about community pharmacists.
- Given time and resource constraints, it is not feasible to provide a comprehensive range of services. Therefore, it is important to determine the particular services that are most needed by the public.

OBJECTIVES

To examine the specific factors that the general public believes have an effect on the image of community pharmacists and also to identify community pharmacists' services that truly fulfill people's needs.

METHODS

- **Study design**: a cross-sectional survey

- **Survey Procedures**

  - Developed a structured questionnaire
  - The questionnaire content was reviewed and approved by experts
  - Conducted a small-scale pilot survey
  - Trained interviewers visited collaborating community pharmacies to recruit respondents
  - Analyzed and interpreted the data collected
  - Finalized the questionnaire

RESULTS

- A total of 404 questionnaires were distributed, of which 401 were deemed completed.

  - The need for comprehensive pharmaceutical services was not correlated with age, gender, having children, living alone, or having prescriptions with refills for chronic diseases.

  - Basic demographic characteristics were presented by frequencies and percentages, whereas the proportions of each response option in the first and second parts of the questionnaire were expressed as percentages.

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- The third section of the questionnaire was expressed as percentages.

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- Table 1: Factors influencing the image of community pharmacists (%)

  - The need for comprehensive pharmaceutical services varied depending on age, gender, having children, living alone, or having prescriptions with refills for chronic diseases.

- Table 2: The need, service locations, time, and payment for pharmaceutical care services

  - The need for pharmaceutical care services varied depending on age, gender, having children, living alone, or having prescriptions with refills for chronic diseases.

DISCUSSION

- The present study identified factors pertinent to community pharmacists' services that are deemed important by the public, which could be areas that community pharmacists emphasize on.

- Our study results indicated that the general public believes that providing sufficient consultation time and privacy protection are important in establishing pharmacists' positive image.

- Home delivery of medications is a service that is in line with the great demand for other home delivery services in modern society. However, our study results showed that only 10.2% of respondents felt that this service is necessary or very necessary. There are two explanations for the findings:

  1. The survey was conducted in community pharmacies, and the respondents were all able to personally visit the pharmacies to collect their medications. Therefore, they did not require pharmacists to deliver medications to their homes.

  2. Most people seemed to have concerns about a potential invasion of privacy.

- As there are a variety of services that could be included in comprehensive pharmaceutical services, it is important to know which services should be prioritized.

- Study Limitations:

  1. Despite the efforts to recruit patients at different times and on different days of the week, the study sample may not represent the adult population in Taiwan.

  2. The questionnaire was administered in community pharmacies, so responses may have been affected by the relationship of the respondents to the community pharmacists or the services they provided.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed that correct dispensing is the most important factor that helps establish a positive image of community pharmacists and that the most needed services were those that required pharmacists' professional competence. In addition, nearly 80% of the respondents reported they needed comprehensive pharmaceutical services and were willing to pay for it.

REFERENCES


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