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Introduction: Community pharmacy based alcohol screening and brief intervention (SBI) services have been commissioned across England for a number of years but evidence on their quality is limited. User experience is paramount to maximising uptake and, ultimately, the impact of these services. Approaches to improving uptake and impact are needed if services are to succeed long term.

Aim: The study aims to developed methods to assess quality of community pharmacy based SBI from a service-user perspective and to support staff to develop their service provision to improve quality.

Methods: Five pharmacies providing alcohol SBI services in three areas were purposively selected and data collected on service delivery and quality, via three methods:

1. Trained Market Researchers (MRs) covertly completed a structured checklist for each pharmacy on environment and service promotion, and requested a hangover treatment, recording experiences and outcomes of services offered.
2. MRs observed interactions between pharmacy staff and customers. Field notes described pharmacy activity and customer interactions.
3. In two pharmacies, IBA service consultations were recorded and service users' views gained by interview 2 weeks later.

Individual feedback reports were discussed with pharmacy staff at each pharmacy in a group interview. Feedback structure is shown in Box 1.

Consent was gained from staff for all observations and notices describing the study were prominently displayed to inform customers that they could ask for their interaction with staff to be excluded. Consent was gained from patients to record conversations and follow-up interviews. The study was approved by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection.

Box 1: Feedback Session Structure

Simulated experience of service provision

- Promotional material & pharmacy layout

Opportunities to offer services

- Demographic profile of customers
- Customer's reason for visiting the pharmacy
- OTC sales where possible links to service provision

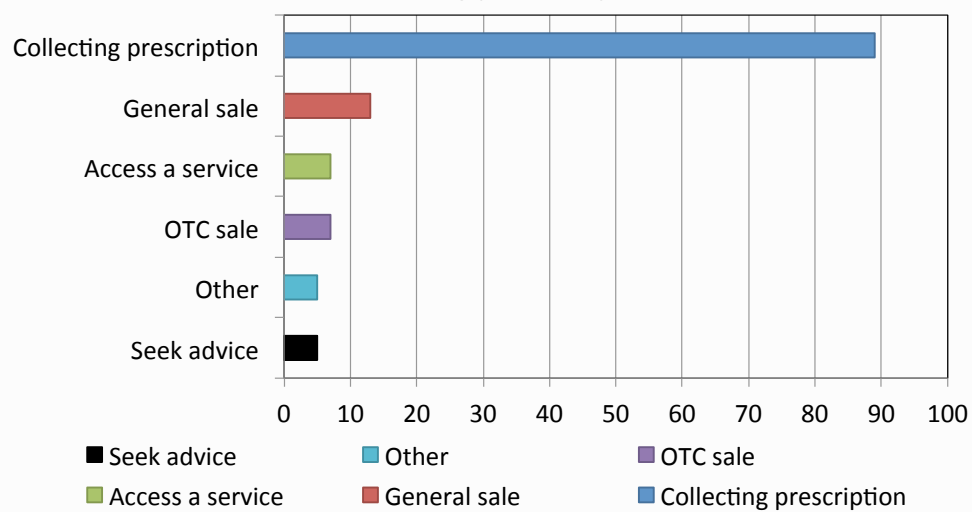
Service user experience (2 pharmacies)

Overcoming barriers

- Identifying and targeting customers
- Standardised procedure/approach
- Tips for delivery of alcohol IBA service

Results:

Numbers of people offered SBI service by reason for visiting pharmacy



Promotion and pharmacy environment were variable in quality from the simulated user perspective and not all MR requests for hangover remedies resulted in an offer of the SBI service. Useful approaches were identified at different pharmacies, e.g. description of the service as an alcohol 'quiz'.

Medicines counter assistants provided 63% of initial interactions with customers, 76% of whom had presented a prescription for dispensing. Quality of questioning was variable, but the views of the 16 service users interviewed were positive. Pharmacy staff welcomed the individualised feedback and engaged in constructive discussion around facilitators and barriers to service provision as well as scope to improve quality.

Conclusions:

- Pharmacy staff were willing to participate in all stages of this project, despite some intensive observation, and consent was freely given by staff and service users.
- Feedback on user experience of the service was received positively, with positive engagement in discussion on service improvement
- Structured observation, with feedback, is a constructive mechanism to support service development and quality enhancement for pharmacy-based alcohol screening and brief advice services.

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