

ANALYSIS OPINIONS PHARMACISTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS TO INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF MEDICINES IN UKRAINE AND THE WORLD

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Abstract

The purpose of the work is to analyse the results of a questionnaire survey of pharmaceutical specialists in order to improve the provision of patient care within the framework of government programs.

Materials and methods. The research used articles from the databases: Pubmed, Medline, Cochrane, Unified Medical Language System and the results of a survey of pharmaceutical workers in Ukraine. **Methods** - analytical, generalization of information, questioning.

Results. The survey of pharmaceutical workers was carried out on the territory of Ukraine and compared with similar surveys in the countries of the world: USA, India, Pakistan. The survey showed that 57.81% of respondents believe that the lack of information component among potential patients of government programs negatively affects the availability of essential medicines. It was also found that the majority of 87.50% of pharmacists are in favor of increasing liability for illegal dispensing of prescription drugs without a prescription. It is also necessary to introduce guidelines on prescription dispensing and monitoring of drug prescriptions.

Conclusions. The study showed the need to improve state and government programs in the process of their implementation in order to increase the availability of medicines based on the opinions of specialists, in particular, pharmaceutical workers who are directly involved in the provision of pharmaceutical care to patients. It is taking into account the opinions of specialists that will help to rationally distribute budgetary funds, which is confirmed by the experience of many countries of the world.

Keywords: *questionnaires of pharmacists, state and government programs, availability of medicines, pharmaceutical assistance*

Introduction

The development of healthcare now needs updating in connection with COVID 19 and significant restrictions, which affected not only Ukraine, but the whole world [1]. The pandemic has shown that approaches to the development of patient-centred policies in the domestic health care system require rethinking and reforming, first of all, to increase the availability of pharmaceutical care for socially unprotected segments of the population. In the absence of social health insurance in Ukraine, such assistance can be realized only with the support of the state through the implementation of government programs. So, in April 2017, the «Available Medicines» program was launched, which included the most common nosology's: CVD, type II diabetes mellitus and bronchial asthma. Later, in accordance with the Government Decree of December 21, 2020 No. 1299, the program included international non-proprietary names of drugs for primary, secondary prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases.

Later, the program was supplemented with drugs for the treatment of other rheumatic diseases [2,3,4,5,6]. Within the framework of the program, reference prices were calculated for drugs included in the List of Medicines, the cost of which is subject to reimbursement.

However, the imperfect legislation in the national health care system has led to such negative consequences as: non-compliance with the WHO recommendations on the choice of reference countries and the choice of further mechanisms for calculating reference prices; non-compliance with the algorithm of the procedure for reimbursing the cost of drugs; violation of the rules for prescribing prescriptions and prescription dispensing of drugs [7,8].

In the process of implementing government programs, pharmacies play a key role, which must provide the population with affordable, effective and high-quality drugs, and the opinion of pharmaceutical specialists on the problems and possibilities of implementing state and government programs becomes relevant.

It is interesting that similar studies were carried out by scientists in different countries of the world and showed a positive result in making

management decisions. Thus, in the work "Pharmacists" viewpoint towards their professional role in healthcare system: a survey of hospital settings of Pakistan, a study was conducted of the attitude of pharmacists to their role in the healthcare system of Pakistan, their experience of working with doctors and participation in projects related to drugs [9]. Based on the results of the survey, the following conclusions were made: it is necessary to raise awareness of the role of the pharmacist among the population and conduct trainings / seminars on the importance of improving pharmacy services in the country's health system.

An article by authors Mohamed Bahlol and Rebecca Susan Dewey surveyed 1,018 pharmaceutical workers. The main purpose of the survey was to assess the readiness of local pharmacies for the COVID-19 pandemic, namely, government support in this matter. Thus, it was found that it

is necessary to disseminate informational support for patient care, regularly update posters, banners / signs regarding the epidemiological situation and state programs to combat COVID-19 [10].

The Patient Satisfaction with Pharmacist-Led Chronic Disease State Management Programs study aimed to determine the satisfaction of patients with diabetes mellitus or cardiovascular disease under the state program. Thus, according to the survey, more than 200 patients (about 80%) were satisfied with participation and had no additional wishes [11].

In total, over the past five years, more than 400 scientific studies have been conducted to increase the availability of drugs and improve their prescription, the results of which can be found in official information databases under the tag "medicine government programs", but only 5 studies on the implementation of various state programs in Ukraine [12,13,14]. This indicates that research in this area is relevant.

The purpose of the work is to conduct a questionnaire survey among pharmaceutical professionals on how to improve the provision of pharmaceutical care to patients within the framework of state-funded programs.

Methods

To achieve this goal, we have developed a step-by-step research algorithm (Fig. 1).

The proposed algorithm contains five stages, the implementation of which will help in conducting a qualitative and informative research with the subsequent prospect of implementing the results.

The study used materials from scientific publications on databases: Pubmed, Medline, Cochrane, Unified Medical Language System to analyse and generalize approaches to the problem being studied; the results of a survey of pharmaceutical workers on the programs of drug reimbursement and improvement of their prescription dispensing [15,16,17].

In our survey, 448 respondents from 20 regions of the country were involved. The largest number of specialists was from the city of Kharkov and the Kharkov region - 235 respondents, the rest - 213 collectively were from Vinnitsa, Dnieper, Kirovograd, Poltava, Lvov, Ivan-Frankivsk, Rivne, Khmelnytsky, Chemivtsi, Transcarpathian, Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporozhye, Kherson, Odessa, Nikolaev, Zhitomir, Kiev, Chernigov and Sumy regions [18].

Results and Discussion.

The questionnaire developed by us for pharmaceutical specialists was conditionally divided into three blocks: the first - socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents; the second - issues of prescription drug dispensing; the third is the issue related to the implementation of the government program «Available Medicines».

So, the results of the first block, namely data on gender, age, length of service and the form of ownership of the institution in which the respondent works, are presented in Table 1.

The results of the survey of pharmaceutical specialists showed that the majority of the respondents were female (89.71%). The overwhelming majority of employees were over 55 years old (54.69%). Also, the vast majority of pharmacists were between the ages of 46 and 55 (37.28%). The largest number of specialists who took part in the survey had work experience in their specialty from 6 to 10 years (51.56%).

Analysis of questionnaires by type of ownership of pharmacies in which respondents work showed that 421 specialists (94.18%) are employed in private pharmacies and only 1.34% of specialists in state-owned pharmacies.

The results of the specialists' answers to the second block of the questionnaire questions are presented below.

Nowadays, in the world practice, the dispensing of prescription drugs is the key to safe pharmacotherapy, because thanks to the prescription, self-medication becomes less affordable, and the patient is prescribed exactly the dose of drugs that is optimal for admission. In this regard, one of the questions in the questionnaire was: "Do you think that prescription drug dispensing provides safer and more rational pharmacotherapy as opposed to OTC dispensing?" The respondents' answers were as follows: 84.60% of respondents think so, no - 15.40% respectively.

Using the results of the questionnaire, it was revealed that, unfortunately, the majority of pharmaceutical workers dispense prescription drugs without prescriptions - 86.13% (Fig. 2). That is why we have included questions concerning the strengthening of liability for illegal dispensing of prescription drugs without a prescription (Fig. 3).

Thus, the majority of pharmaceutical workers who took part in the survey are in favour of increased responsibility - 87.50%. The problem of both written and electronic recipes is technical errors and omissions. In this regard, the respondents were presented with the question of introducing Good Prescribing Practice in Ukraine, the majority of respondents (89.29%) believe that this practice should be actively introduced into the healthcare system and disseminated among doctors and pharmacists.

The structure of the respondents' answers about the methods of assessing medicinal (prescription) prescriptions, which are advisable to be introduced in Ukraine, is shown in Fig. 4.

Thus, the respondents' answers to the question were as follows: 37.95% for the introduction of prescription dispensing guidelines; 32.37% for monitoring medicinal prescriptions; 17.63% believe that there is a need for modern advanced training (training) for doctors; 12.05% have an opinion on the motivation and financial incentives of doctors.

According to the survey, it was found that the majority of 85.23% of respondents support the spread of automated information retrieval systems in health care (Fig. 5).

Information retrieval systems are designed to collect, process, store and provide medical and pharmaceutical information using technical means, which include electronic databases, Internet systems, and the like. The dissemination of such systems in healthcare will help to quickly collect the necessary information for doctors of various profiles about the patient's condition, in turn, will help prevent unwanted consequences of treatment, and in some cases save the patient's life [19].

The third block of questions in the questionnaire was related to the problems of implementation of the government program «Available Medicines». So, the answers to the question "What prompted your pharmacy to take part in the government program «Available Medicines»? (Fig. 6).

According to the structure of the respondents' answers, the majority - 56.15% - took part in the Affordable Medicines program to bring pharmaceutical care closer to the patient and increase the pharmacy's profit - 52.57%. The question of the problems that arise in the implementation of state programs showed that the majority of respondents consider insufficient awareness of the population about the content of the programs (57.81%) (Fig. 7).

Thus, the results of the answers of pharmaceutical specialists to the question "Is it necessary to carry out information and educational activities to prevent patients from self-medication?" were as follows: yes - 86.61%, no - 13.39%, respectively.

The last in this block were questions on the development of special software products to provide feedback in the system (doctor-patient-pharmacist), Fig. 8t.

As can be seen from Fig. 8 the overwhelming majority - 85.91% of specialists consider it expedient to develop and implement special computer programs to provide feedback between a doctor, patient and pharmacist.

It should be noted that similar studies conducted in the United States, India, Pakistan and other countries of the world have shown a positive trend towards changes in the field of health care in order to increase the availability of medicines for patients. Also, taking into account the opinions of specialists who are directly involved in the implementation of

state projects financed from the budget, taking into account the effectiveness of the relationship between all subjects.

Conclusion

Summing up the results of the survey of pharmacists, it can be argued that solving urgent problems related to the availability of medicines is a priority in the further development and reform of the health sector in Ukraine, especially in a pandemic. Thus, universal access of all segments of the population to pharmaceutical care is possible only with reasonably adequate funding of the health sector and the rational use of budget funds. [20,21].

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Fig. 1 Algorithm for scientific research

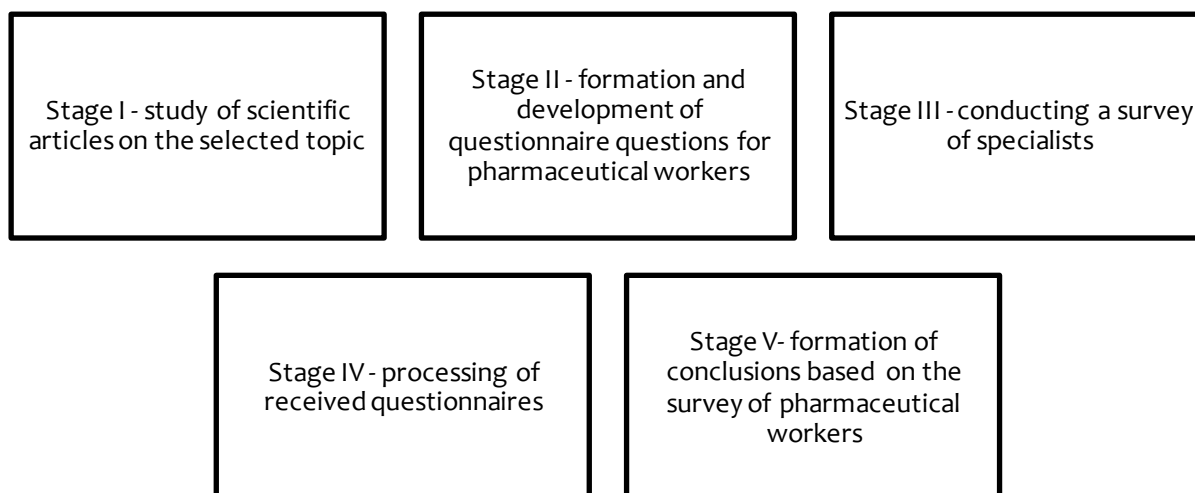


Table 1. Characteristics of respondents participated in the survey

| Gender of respondents | Number | Specific weight, % |
|---|--------|--------------------|
| male | 47 | 10,51% |
| female | 401 | 89,71% |
| Age | | |
| Up to 25 years | 3 | 0,67% |
| 25-35 years | 5 | 1,12% |
| 36-45 years | 28 | 6,25% |
| 46-55 years | 167 | 37,28% |
| more than 55 years | 245 | 54,69% |
| Work experience in the specialty | | |
| 1-5 years | 193 | 43,08% |
| 6-10 years | 231 | 51,56% |
| 11-20 years | 19 | 4,24% |
| more than 20 years | 5 | 1,12% |
| Ownership of pharmacies in the running respondent | | |
| private | 421 | 94,18% |
| communal | 21 | 4,70% |
| state | 5 | 1,34% |

Fig.2 The results of a survey of specialists on the implementation of prescription drugs without a prescription

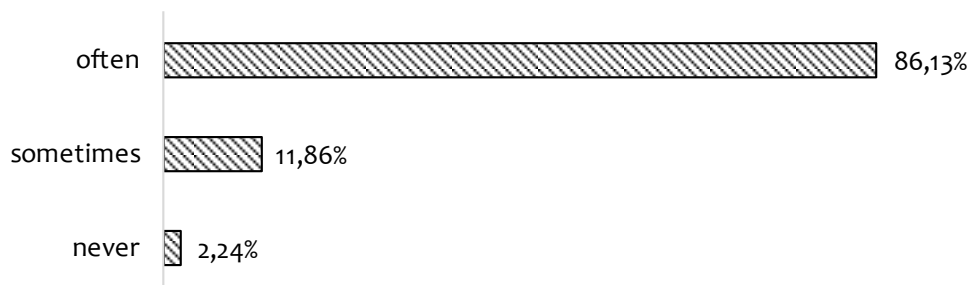


Fig. 3 The structure of the answers of specialists regarding the strengthening of responsibility for the illegal release of prescription drugs without a prescription

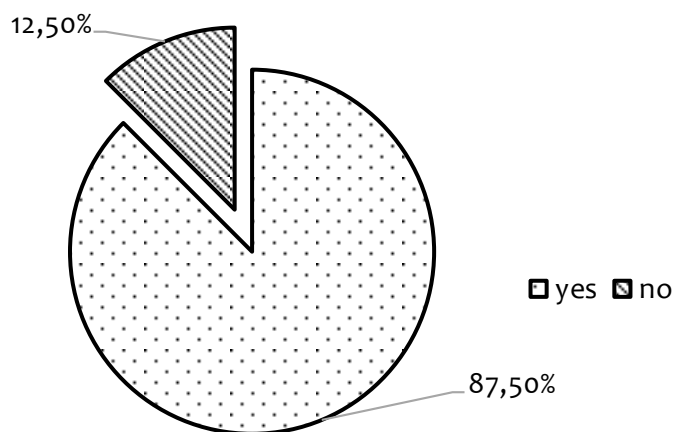


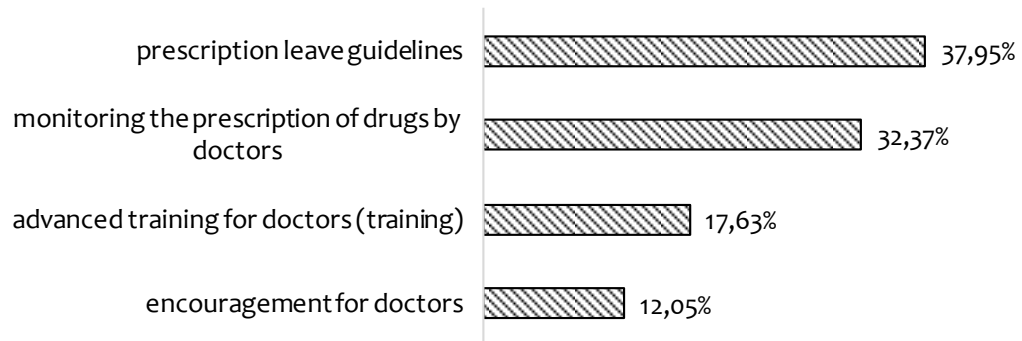
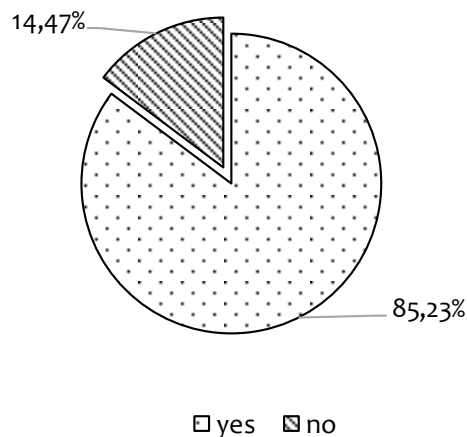
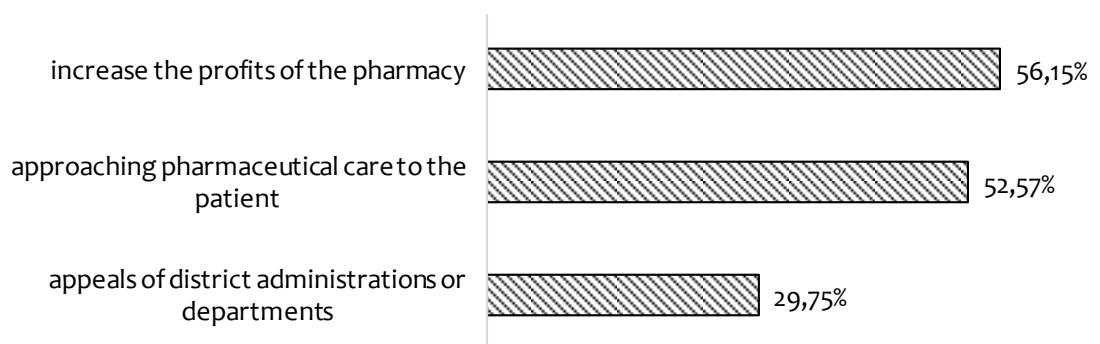
Fig. 4 The structure of the answers of specialists on the methods of evaluation of prescriptions**Fig. 5** The structure of the answers of experts on the spread of automated information retrieval systems in health care**Fig. 6** Results of experts' answers to questions on participation in the Government program

Fig. 7 Structure of specialists' answers to problems in case of participation in state programs of drug availability

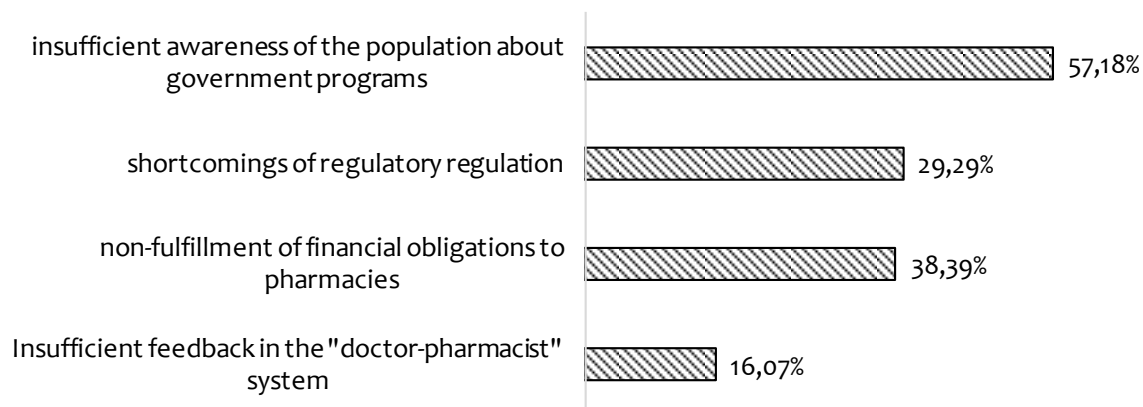


Fig. 8 The structure of the answers of specialists on the development and implementation of special programs to ensure communication in the system "doctor-patient-pharmacist"

