

An intervention to improve advice on generic substitution in community pharmacy



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To improve the information provided by community pharmacists and pharmacy assistants when discussing generic substitution or dispensing generic medicines, pharmacy tools that were compatible with existing pharmacy work flow were developed, distributed and evaluated.

The intervention was part of the 2008 'Generic medicines are an equal choice' campaign which aimed to increase consumers' understanding about generic medicines. Key implementation points and evaluation findings are shown below.

Evaluating the acceptability, usefulness and sustainability of the intervention

Quantitative survey

- ☒ Faxed to 4100 pharmacies
- ☒ Completed by 998 respondents (24% response rate)

Qualitative face-to-face interviews

- ☒ Interviewed 51 pharmacy staff members from various geographical areas and practice types (e.g. privately owned, chain)

Unpacking the pharmacy toolkit

Pharmacy toolkit

- Distributed to 5063 community pharmacies
- 63.6% (n=635) pharmacists recalled receiving the kit, 26% (n=262) were unsure, and 9.3% (n=93) indicated they did not
- Of those who recalled receiving the kit, 78% (n=495) used some of the kit; 10.4% (n=66) opened the kit and intended to use it; 5.4% (n=34) opened but did not use the kit

Ancillary label

- Label affixed to generic prescription medicines highlights the medicine's active ingredient, the brand it replaces, and the warning 'Do not use both'
- Used by 59.6% (n=295) of respondents who reported using at least some of the kit
- Included as label 15b in the 21st edition of the Australian Pharmaceutical Formulary and Handbook (APF21)

Prescription repeat folders

- Folders remind consumers that generic medicines contain the same active ingredient as, and are an equal choice to, original brand medicines
- Used by 74.3% (n=386) of respondents who reported using at least some of the kit
- Folders were cost- and time-effective for small, privately-owned pharmacies without their own branded folders, but were not useful for those required to use their own branded folders (e.g. large chains)

Collaboration and consultation

- Intervention delivered in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, practising pharmacists and consumers

Reorder form

- Arrangements with established pharmacy stationery supplier ensured pharmacies were able to easily reorder additional stock of the tools as required
- At the time of survey, 41.5% (n=233) had not needed to reorder toolkit items
- 60 pharmacies had reordered toolkit contents, including the prescription repeat folder (55.0%, n=33), ancillary labels (38.3%, n=23) and prescription intake forms (35.0%, n=21)

Prescription intake forms

- Forms emphasise need for consumer's informed consent before substituting brands, and common situations where substitution should not be offered
- Used by 35.4% (n=175) of respondents who reported using at least some of the kit
- Forms were used in various ways, including as a training tool for new staff
- Some reported it as being 'too long' and time-consuming to complete in a busy pharmacy; however, at least one pharmacy found the level of detail useful for complex cases

Brand substitution best practice guide when taking in and giving out prescription medicines

- Used by 56.4% (n=279; taking in) and 42.2% (n=209; giving out) responding pharmacists who reported using at least some of the kit
- The pharmacy owner or 'decision maker' in the pharmacy appeared to drive whether these guides were used

A toolkit to assist community pharmacies with safe and appropriate use of generic medicines was developed by an inter-organisational collaboration. This provided pharmacies with a range of practical tools that fit with their existing work flow and could be tailored to meet specific needs in their practice.

The formal adoption of the ancillary label in APF21 was a key outcome for sustainability. It would be useful to evaluate consumers' experience and satisfaction with current practice. Repetition and reinforcement of intervention key messages would also be desirable to sustain use of the tools.

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