

Communication between community pharmacist and general practitioner

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Introduction: The correct use of medicines is crucial to achieve the overall effectiveness of the medication and expected health outcomes. It is important that any questions or queries the pharmacist may have about prescriptions and the medication of a patient can be discussed with the patient's general practitioner (GP) in an efficient way for both patients, pharmacists, and GPs. To date, there is no digital communication between Norwegian pharmacies and GPs. All communication is hence done by telephone, which is very time-consuming for all parties.

Purpose: To explore the communication needs of the patients, GPs, and community pharmacists. Furthermore, describe how the different needs should be communicated and identify what could be communicated digitally.

Method: A working group consisting of three GPs and three pharmacists, representing the Norwegian College of General Practice, The Norwegian Association of General Practitioners, the Norwegian Pharmacist Association, and the Norwegian Pharmacy Association was established. The legal framework and working processes for pharmacists were explained for the GPs. A Norwegian study from 2016, investigating situations where pharmacists need more information to be able to dispense a prescription, was used as a base to discuss different needs within pharmacy. The needs for GPs were identified by empirical data.

Results: A list of situations where there is a need for communication was agreed on. The list was divided into the needs of the patient, the GP, and the pharmacist. Furthermore, it was agreed on which situations that still needs to be communicated by phone, what should be communicated by the patient and which situations would be suitable for digital communication. The GPs were concerned about increased workload getting digital messages from even more health personnel. The pharmacists were concerned about not getting responses back from the GPs, when a reply is wanted.

Conclusion: Pharmacists and GPs welcome a way of communicating digitally. There is a need to establish clear guidelines on how and when to use digital messages. A pilot study to develop and test such guidelines using digital messages is planned to start in 2024.