

COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH PUBLIC HEALTH IN GREAT BRITAIN

J. BUSH¹, C.A. LANGLEY¹, K.A.WILSON¹

¹Aston Pharmacy School, School of Life and Health Sciences, Aston University, Birmingham, B4 7ET. UK.

Objective

The objective of the research was to examine to what extent community pharmacists in Great Britain believed that their job was concerned with local public health issues.

Methods

The project (Pharmacy and Public Health) received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Life and Health Sciences at Aston University. After piloting, in August 2006 a self-completion postal questionnaire was sent to practising community pharmacists in Great Britain (n=1998), with a follow-up to non-responders 4 weeks later. A final response rate of 51% (n=1023/1998) was achieved.

Results

Respondents were asked to indicate their answer to the question "to what extent is your present job concerned with local public health issues?" on a three-point scale – "highly", "slightly" or "not at all" concerned with public health. They were also asked to indicate whether they were pharmacy owners, employee pharmacists or self-employed locum pharmacists. Less than half (43%, n=384/898) of respondents answering both questions believed that their job was highly concerned with public health. A relationship was observed between employment status and the level to which a respondent believed that their job was concerned with public health (χ^2 test with P=0.001). Over half of pharmacy owners (51%, n=68/134) considered that their job was highly concerned with public health compared to 44% (n=193/443) of employee pharmacists and 38% (n=123/321) of locum pharmacists.

Conclusion

This research suggests that community pharmacists in Great Britain are not 'fully engaged' with public health. Pharmacy owners may feel more enfranchised in the public health movement than their employees and locums. Indeed, one-in-ten locums reported that their job was not at all concerned with public health which, as locum pharmacists constitute over a third of actively employed community pharmacists¹, could be a limiting factor in any drive to strengthen the public health function of community pharmacists.

References

1. Seston L, Hassell K. Pharmacy Workforce Census 2008: Main findings. London: Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, 2009.