Community Pharmacists’ Opinions Regarding Administering Non-Prescription Medicines in a Medical Emergency

Sara McMillan(1), Laetitia Hattingh(2), Michelle King(3)

Griffith University, Gold Coast, Qld.

Objective. To investigate community pharmacists’ opinions of their role in administering Pharmacy (S2) and Pharmacist Only (S3) Medicines in a medical emergency.

Methods. A survey of 151 Gold Coast and Toowoomba community pharmacists was conducted in October 2009. Pharmacists were asked to identify if they should, can or have administered a range of S2 or S3 medicines in an emergency in the pharmacy and if clarification of this role was required. The survey also questioned when pharmacists would administer an S3 medicine and whether they believed the community viewed pharmacists as more skilled in an emergency than a first aider.

Results. The study achieved a 29.8% (n=45) response rate, and demonstrated similar results regarding whether pharmacists should administer salbutamol (22/44), adrenaline (23/42), glyceryl trinitrate (22/43) and aspirin (18/36) in a medical emergency. The majority (36/43) believed that role clarification was required. Pharmacists were more likely to administer an S3 medicine in an emergency when they considered all potential outcomes first, had no easy access to a doctor, and the patient couldn’t administer the medicine they carried with them (40/45). Twenty-five (55.6%) believed that the community would view pharmacists as more skilled than a qualified first aider in an emergency.

Discussion. Community pharmacists have direct access to S2 and S3 medicines for the treatment of a variety of medical emergencies. However, there are currently no guidelines for pharmacists in terms of medicine administration in an emergency situation in the pharmacy. Clarification of this role is required.