CAN PHARMACISTS IMPROVE THEIR PATIENT COMMUNICATION BY READING FICTION?

NARRATIVE MEDICINE IN PHARMACY PRACTICE – A FEASIBILITY STUDY
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Background
Empathy is an essential part of good patient communication. However, pharmacists often provide information without taking patients’ preferences into account. Narrative medicine is an innovative approach where empathic skills are nurtured through close reading of literary texts and creative writing.

Aim
To investigate the feasibility of a course in narrative medicine for pharmacists

Materials and Methods
A course in narrative medicine was offered to Danish pharmacists in summer 2020. The course consisted of close reading of short literary texts about illness and related creative writing, facilitated by both experienced literary and health care professional lecturers. Pharmacists’ empathy was assessed before and after participating in the course by The Jefferson Scale of Empathy (JSE). Feasibility was assessed focusing on acceptability, demand, implementation, practicality, and limited efficacy using focus group interviews, participant observation and satisfaction questionnaire.

Conclusion
The course in narrative medicine was feasible on all assessed parameters, even though the course capacity was not fully utilized. A course in narrative medicine has potential for improving the pharmacists’ general communication with patients.

Results

8 pharmacists from community and hospital pharmacy (16 seats available)

2 separate course days from 9 am to 5 pm

The pharmacists accepted participation in the course, even though some of the sessions required a personal investment far from their normal routines and education

The pharmacists were, in general, very satisfied with the course and found it useful in their daily patient communication.

No significant change in empathy measure was found, but the pharmacists found the JSE scale acceptable to complete

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