

Community pharmacy in Austria, England, Estonia and Portugal: Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed the range of pharmacy services offered?

Sabine Vogler, Maximilian Salcher-Konrad, Verena Knoll
WHO Collaborating Centre for Pharmaceutical Pricing and Reimbursement Policies,
Pharmacoeconomics Department, Gesundheit Österreich GmbH (GÖG /
Austrian National Public Health Institute), Vienna, Austria

Community pharmacy has been changing over the decades

BACKGROUND

- Community pharmacies form an essential part for patient access to medicines
- The role of community pharmacy has changed over time
- New pharmacy services have been offered

HYPOTHESIS

- COVID-19 pandemic may have contributed to changes in community pharmacy services

OBJECTIVES

- To **survey** the state of implementation of community pharmacy services in selected European countries
- To **analyse** similarities & differences in services
- To **assess** developments
- To **identify** potential drivers for change

METHODS

Case study countries

- Mix of different demographic, geographic, economic and health & pharmacy system characteristics
- Four European case study countries: Austria, England, Estonia and Portugal

Survey, validation and analysis

- Development of a **framework** of potential community pharmacy services based on the literature
- Compilation of **country fact sheets**: pre-filled based on the literature and validated by a country expert (community pharmacist) in writing and during an interview (2023 data)
- Interviews** with country experts in the case study countries based on an interview guide (Q4/2022 - Q1/2023)

The range of pharmacy services has expanded

Medicine related services		Austria	England	Estonia	Portugal
COUNSELLING	Counselling of POM and NPM				
	Medication review type 1				
	Medication review type 2				
	Online / telephone counselling				
DISPENSING	Dispensing medicines				
	Repeat dispensing				
PRODUCE	Compounding				
	Unit dosing		n.a.		
LOGISTICS	Sourcing & procuring alternative med.			Sourcing, but no procuring	
	Home delivery & to other institutions				
	Disposal of medicines returned				
SELECTING MEDICINES	Prescribing medicines				
	Repeat prescription				
	Generic substitution				
VACCINATION	Influenza vaccination			Not by pharmacist	
	COVID-19 vaccination			Not by pharmacist	
	Other vaccinations			Not by pharmacist	

- Community pharmacies offer **core & additional pharmacy services** (mostly but not solely medicine related)
- Cross-country and intra-country differences** exist with regard to the range of services offered
- Developments** occurred over time, but some new tasks were offered during the COVID-19 pandemic

Non-medicine related services		Austria	England	Estonia	Portugal
HEALTH PROMOTION	Counselling on general health topics				
	Disease-management programs				
	Infectious diseases				
	Point-of-care testing of health parameters				
TESTING	Screening programs & collaboration with lab.				
	Signposting to other services				
OTHERS	Minor ailment schemes				
	Needle exchange program				

Green: service offered by all or a substantial share of pharmacies in the country;
Yellow: service offered by some pharmacies in the country; Red: service not offered

COVID-19 pandemic was one of the drivers for change

Factors driving developments in community pharmacy in the case study countries



- Several factors** have contributed to the development of additional pharmacy services
- Factors may be **facilitating** or **hindering**, in the case study countries they were mainly facilitators
- The **COVID-19 pandemic** appeared to have reinforced some of the supporting factors (e.g., accessibility of pharmacies, trust in pharmacists) and triggered change

The findings were obtained in a research on community pharmacy in Austria, which included an international comparative analysis. The research was funded by the Austrian Chamber of Pharmacists. A technical report of this study (in German) was published: Salcher-Konrad M, Knoll V, Vogler S (2023): *Leistungsspektrum der öffentlichen Apotheken im österreichischen Gesundheitssystem – Bestandsaufnahme, Analyse und Ausblick* (in German with an English short summary, title in English: Review and analysis of services provided by community pharmacies in Austria). Vienna: Gesundheit Österreich

WHO Collaborating Centre for Pharmaceutical Pricing and Reimbursement Policies, Pharmacoeconomics Department, Gesundheit Österreich GmbH (GÖG / Austrian National Public Health Institute), 1010 Vienna, Austria, ppri.goeg.at & www.goeg.at