

A qualitative study exploring medication management in people with dementia living in the community and the potential role of the community pharmacist

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Background

The number of people living with dementia is increasing rapidly. Dementia increases the likelihood of risk factors, such as comorbidity and polypharmacy, for adverse drug reactions; the presence of cognitive impairment also increases the risk of medication errors. With increasing cognitive impairment, medication management shifts from the responsibility of the person with dementia to formal (paid) or informal (family) carers. Informal carers may not feel equipped for such a role which they can find burdensome and stressful, worsening the quality of life of the carer and person with dementia.

Main Messages

- With increasing cognitive impairment, medication management in PwD (people with dementia) becomes the responsibility of informal carers.
- The whole process of managing the medication of someone with dementia was generally seen to be complex and challenging, which created both practical problems and an emotional burden for the informal carer.
- Informal carers need appropriate support from Health and Social care Professionals (HSCP).
- Community pharmacists could provide further support to the informal carers of PwD with medication management.
- Community pharmacists need to work outside the physical environment of their community pharmacy to deliver such support.
- There is a clear need for further research to develop the mechanisms by which community pharmacists working with other clinicians could provide such support, and then test the effectiveness of the mechanisms.

Conclusion

Medication management for PwD living in the community appears to be a complex process with informal carers playing a key role. Community pharmacists could improve the process by providing further support to informal carers.