

Prescribing and dispensing functions in medicine and pharmacy and the potential for pharmacist prescribing in Nigeria: a cross-sectional survey of pharmacists' views

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Background

- There is a separation of dispensing and prescribing functions among healthcare professionals in Nigeria.
- The legislation accords prescribing authority to medical doctors and dentists and dispensing authority to pharmacists.^[1]
- However, patients' access to prescription medicines can be adversely affected by the shortage of medical prescribers (about 40 doctors per 100,000 people) leading to longer waiting times in hospitals and poor geographical access to physicians.
- In addition, this separation of dispensing and prescribing functions creates professional division and leads to the fragmentation of patient care.

Research aim

- To explore the views of Nigerian pharmacists on the separation of prescribing and dispensing functions and the potential barriers to granting prescribing authority to them.

Methods

- Ethical approval was granted by the School of Healthcare Research Ethics Committee, University of Leeds, UK and the Plateau State Specialist Hospital Health Research Ethics Committee, Nigeria.
- A cross-sectional survey was conducted in August 2014 among 775 pharmacists.
- The questionnaire for the survey was developed based on previous Nigerian studies and had 62 items.^[2,3]
- Quantitative data were entered into the SPSS to generate descriptive statistics while textual data from open ended questions were analysed using a thematic approach.

Results

- The response rate was 40.6% (315/775)
- Many respondents (n= 256; 81.3%) reported that the current separation of prescribing as the doctors' role and dispensing as the pharmacists' role in Nigeria is not in the best interest of the patient.
- Almost all of these respondents (250 of 256; 96.7%) agreed that pharmacist prescribing would increase patients' access to treatment
- Analysis of textual comments identified a number of potential barriers to pharmacist prescribing in Nigeria (Figure 1).

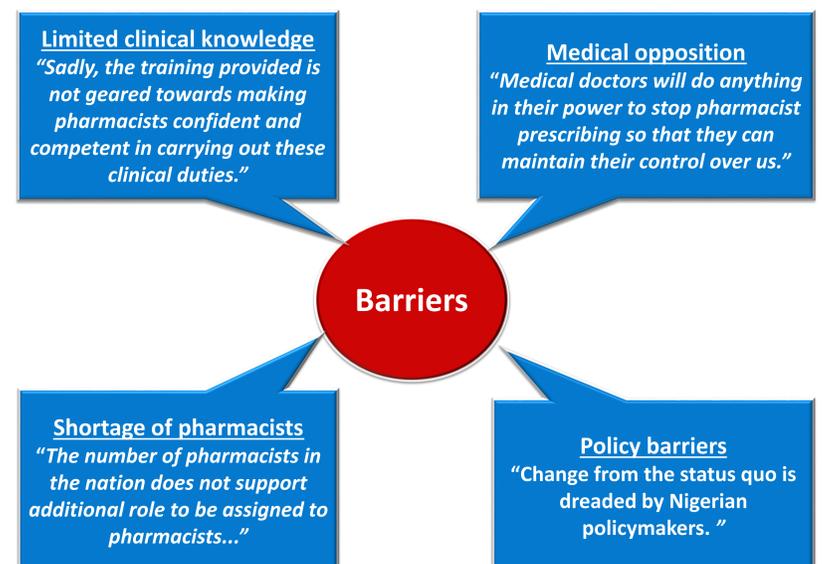


Figure 1: Respondents' comments on the potential barriers to pharmacist prescribing in Nigeria

Conclusion

- The current prescribing arrangements in Nigeria do not sufficiently meet the needs of patients in terms of timely and convenient access to prescriptions. .
- Pharmacist prescribing represents an opportunity to increase patients' access to care.

References

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