"Enhancing the role of community pharmacists in primary care"

Epidemiological data indicates an urgent need for strengthening of primary care to enable adequate, timely and rational responses to the burden of chronic and preventable diseases.

Integrated care requires seamless and joined-up provision of care and demands effective care pathways between community pharmacies and other healthcare providers.

Patient-centred care cannot be achieved without unified mobilisation of all relevant providers towards common purposes.

Community pharmacists are qualified and accessible health professionals whose capabilities are neglected or, at least, still largely underused by health systems.

Across Europe, numerous services are provided by community pharmacists in primary care. They include health promotion and disease prevention (vaccination, needle exchange, health campaigns), self-care support (treatment of minor health problems, instruction on the use of self-administration therapeutic devices, adherence programs), risk screening and referral (cardiovascular risk assessment, diabetes risk assessment, obesity risk assessment, HIV testing), disease management (regular follow-up of patients on asthma, diabetes, hypertension & hyperlipidemia, oral anticoagulation therapy, directly observed therapy (e.g. methadone), HIV therapy) and case management (medication review, “Brown Bag Review”, medication reconciliation and packaging interventions using a pill box or blister packs)\(^1\).

In 2012 the Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU)\(^2\) published their “Blueprint” for European community pharmacies calling for greater use of this under-utilised resource\(^3\). Since then, the contribution pharmacists can make to help address the growing burden on EU health systems (and to strengthen their resilience) has been increasingly recognised. For example, the joint European Commission-OECD “Health at a Glance” publication\(^4\) and the European Commission’s Expert Panel on Effective Ways of Investing in Health

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2. PGEU represents 400,000 community pharmacists from 32 European countries
recommendations\textsuperscript{1} both call for greater use of community pharmacists. Evidence on the clinical and cost-effectiveness of such services is now widely available\textsuperscript{6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17}.

In Portugal, community pharmacies have great potential to embrace new activities within the health system. Portuguese community pharmacies have high levels of professional qualifications, density, accessibility and advanced technological resources. Additionally, public opinion surveys consistently show high levels of trust and satisfaction by citizens regarding the service available from pharmacies\textsuperscript{18}.

Recently the Portuguese Ministry of Health and the National Association of Pharmacies (ANF) signed an innovative memorandum of understanding to deliver new pharmacy public health interventions aligned with health policy and patient needs.

This range of activities include, (but are not limited to), public health interventions, access to medicines previously only available in hospitals and experimental programmes, thus enhancing new interfaces between pharmacies and other healthcare providers in primary care.

Interventions include needle exchange, those in the area of diabetes, influenza vaccination, rational use of medicines and adherence, management of therapy and administration of opioid substitution therapies. Additionally, pharmacies are recognised as having a role in health literacy, quaternary prevention, disease prevention, health promotion and self-care. Such topics have also been included as part of a parallel agreement with the National Association of Health Family Units, thus reinforcing a coalition in primary care.

This innovative approach “qualifies” pharmacies’ interventions as a form of health technology. Each intervention is subject to a protocol and will be assessed and evaluated during a trial

\textsuperscript{1} http://ec.europa.eu/health/expert_panel/sites/expertpanel/files/012_disruptive_innovation_en.pdf
\textsuperscript{14} https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/gphc_public_perceptions_report - final.pdf
period. Based upon the generated evidence and health gains, the Ministry of Health can include such services as part of future contracting with pharmacies.

This workshop entitled "Enhancing the role of community pharmacists in Primary Care", co-organised by PGEU and ANF, aims to highlight and discuss the potential benefits of a close cooperation between pharmacies and other healthcare providers in primary care settings, showcasing the Portuguese experience as a case study.

Workshop Format:

- OECD (Luke Slawomirski): Key note / Background to “New Health Technologies – Managing Access, Value and Sustainability” (new models, access to care, role of pharmacists in HTA etc)
- PGEU (Jamie Wilkinson): Overview of new services from community pharmacies
- Pharmacists (Claire Anderson): Overview of evidence for the enhanced role of community pharmacists
- Pharmacists (PT): Experiences of collaborating with GPs
- GPs (PT): Experience of collaborating with pharmacists
- Discussion

Following the presentations there will be an interactive panel discussion with the speakers joined by nurse representatives. Audience participation is strongly encouraged!