Comparison of Community & Hospital Pharmacists' Sources of Information About Medicines: Use of the UKMi Network

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**Introduction**

- Despite making up ~70% of pharmacists, community pharmacists (CPs) submit a small minority of the enquiries received by the UKMi network.
- Hospital pharmacists (HPs) submit a significant proportion of enquiries, despite making up ~20% of the work force.
- Newer CP services may require increased access to information about medicines, so the objectives of this study were to identify how often CPs & HPs use the UKMi network, & to explore reasons for any differences.

**Method**

- Quantitative data were collected via a questionnaire sent to CPs, HPs & MI centres across the SW of England in 2011.
- The questionnaires contained only minor sector specific variations.
- Qualitative data from telephone interviews were analysed to explore the reasoning behind individual pharmacists' decisions.

**Results**

- 56% Proportion of CPs who had never submitted an MI enquiry to the UKMi network
- 100% Proportion of HPs who had previously submitted an enquiry to the UKMi network
- 3% Proportion of UKMi enquiries in the study area submitted by CPs in the previous year
- 32% Proportion of UKMi enquiries in the study area submitted by HPs in the previous year
- 3 Number of MI centres in the study area reporting no CP enquiries in the previous year

**Discussion**

- During interviews, HPs highlighted the value of being able to talk to an experienced pharmacist.
- CPs highlighted the importance of obtaining an answer quickly.
- CPs had concerns that the UKMi network might not be able to provide an answer quickly, but knew from experience that the NPA provides a speedy service.

"If I get an answer for this patient, are they even going to come back?"

- CPs' comments suggested that the role & availability of the UKMi network was not effectively promoted in this sector.

- In general, the UKMi network is meeting the needs of HPs & is widely used by this sector of the profession.
- To a lesser extent, it also appears to meet the needs of the few CPs who use it, but poor promotion to this sector & MI pharmacists' possible lack of understanding of useful timescales for CPs prevent more widespread use of the service.
- As clinical services in CP grow & the future role of the UKMi network is determined, these issues may need to be addressed.