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
- Proportion of CPs who had never submitted an MI enquiry to the UKMi network: 56%
- Proportion of HPs who had previously submitted an enquiry to the UKMi network: 100%
- Proportion of UKMi enquiries in the study area submitted by CPs in the previous year: 3%
- Proportion of UKMi enquiries in the study area submitted by HPs in the previous year: 32%
- Number of MI centres in the study area reporting no CP enquiries in the previous year: 3
- Proportion of CPs who had previously submitted an enquiry to the UKMi network who would do so again: 93%

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

"If I get an answer for this patient, are they even going to come back?"
"I can get some information to my patient or doctor within 5 minutes, which is really important." [CP w.r.t. NPA]