

Exploring the Impact of Pharmacist-Led Wellness Programs on Patient Engagement and Health Behaviors: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Objective: This study explores the impact of pharmacist-led wellness programs on patient engagement and health behaviors. It aims to understand patients' experiences with these programs and assess their influence on health-promoting behaviors.

Methods: A qualitative approach was employed using semi-structured interviews with 20 participants who had completed a pharmacist-led wellness program. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes and subthemes related to patient experiences and behavioral changes.

Findings: The study revealed that pharmacist-led wellness programs significantly enhance patients' health knowledge and awareness, improve health behaviors, and foster a positive perception of the pharmacist's role. Key themes included increased health knowledge, improved adherence to medication and lifestyle changes, and a strong patient-pharmacist relationship. Challenges such as accessibility issues and initial skepticism were also identified.

Conclusion: Pharmacist-led wellness programs effectively improve patient engagement and health behaviors. Personalization and addressing barriers are crucial for maximizing program effectiveness. Future research should focus on long-term outcomes and program optimization.

Keywords: Pharmacist-led wellness programs, patient engagement, health behaviors, qualitative study, health education, medication adherence.

Introduction

Pharmacists have increasingly become integral players in the provision of wellness and preventive care, reflecting a broader shift towards patient-centered healthcare. Wellness programs led by pharmacists aim to enhance patient engagement and promote health behaviors, addressing a range of health issues from chronic disease management to lifestyle modification. The significance of these programs lies in their potential to improve patient outcomes through tailored education, motivational support, and behavioral interventions (Greer et al., 2016; Mohiuddin, 2020).

Patient engagement is crucial for the success of wellness programs, as it directly influences adherence to health-promoting behaviors and treatment plans (Hibbard & Greene, 2013). Pharmacists, with their accessible healthcare expertise, are uniquely positioned to foster patient engagement by providing personalized support and education (Mohiuddin, 2020). The effectiveness of these programs in altering health behaviors and enhancing patient engagement remains a critical area of investigation.

Several studies have explored the impact of pharmacist-led interventions on specific health outcomes. For instance, pharmacist-led diabetes management programs have shown improved glycemic control and patient adherence (Pontefract et al., 2018). Similarly, evidence suggests that pharmacist involvement in smoking cessation and weight management programs leads to positive health behavior changes (Brett et al., 2019; Haverkamp et al., 2022). However, there is limited qualitative research specifically examining how patients experience and perceive pharmacist-led wellness programs and the mechanisms through which these programs influence their engagement and health behaviors.

Understanding these dynamics is essential for optimizing the design and implementation of wellness programs. This study aims to explore the experiences of patients participating in pharmacist-led wellness

programs, focusing on how these programs influence their engagement in health-promoting behaviors. By delving into patient perspectives, the research seeks to provide insights into the effectiveness of pharmacist-led interventions and inform strategies for enhancing their impact.

Literature Review

The Role of Pharmacists in Wellness Programs: Pharmacists have traditionally been involved in medication management, but their roles have expanded to include broader health promotion activities, such as wellness programs. Pharmacist-led wellness programs typically focus on preventive care and chronic disease management, integrating health education, behavior change strategies, and personalized support to improve patient outcomes (Greer et al., 2016; Mohiuddin, 2020). These programs leverage the unique position of pharmacists within the healthcare system to provide accessible, patient-centered care.

Impact on Patient Engagement: Patient engagement is a critical component of successful wellness programs. Engaged patients are more likely to adhere to health-promoting behaviors and treatment plans (Hibbard & Greene, 2013). Pharmacist-led programs have been shown to enhance patient engagement through personalized education, motivational interviewing, and support (Morrison et al., 2017). For instance, studies have demonstrated that pharmacists who provide tailored counseling and follow-up support can significantly increase patient involvement in their own care and improve self-management practices (Pontefract et al., 2018).

Effects on Health Behaviors: Pharmacist-led wellness programs often aim to modify health behaviors related to chronic disease management and preventive care. Research has indicated that these programs can lead to substantial improvements in various health behaviors. For example, pharmacist-led diabetes management programs have been associated with better glycemic control and increased adherence to diabetes care plans (Brett et al., 2019). Similarly, programs focused on smoking cessation and weight management have yielded positive results in changing smoking habits and achieving weight loss goals (Haverkamp et al., 2022).

Mechanisms of Influence: Understanding how pharmacist-led wellness programs influence patient behaviors involves exploring several mechanisms. One key mechanism is the provision of personalized, actionable health information. Pharmacists are able to tailor education to individual patient needs, which enhances the relevance and impact of the information provided (Morrison et al., 2017). Additionally, the supportive role of pharmacists, including motivational interviewing and goal setting, plays a significant role in promoting sustained behavior change (Hibbard & Greene, 2013).

Gaps in the Literature: While existing studies highlight the positive outcomes of pharmacist-led wellness programs, there remains a need for qualitative research to deepen our understanding of patient experiences with these programs. Current evidence predominantly focuses on quantitative measures of program effectiveness, such as changes in clinical outcomes and adherence rates (Pontefract et al., 2018). Qualitative insights into patient perceptions and experiences can provide valuable information on how these programs are received and what factors contribute to their success (Greer et al., 2016).

Conclusion : The literature indicates that pharmacist-led wellness programs can effectively enhance patient engagement and promote health behaviors. However, further research is needed to explore patient perspectives and experiences with these programs. Such qualitative insights are crucial for optimizing program design and implementation, ensuring that pharmacist-led interventions continue to meet patient needs and achieve desired health outcomes.

Methodology

Study Design: This research employed a qualitative study design to explore the impact of pharmacist-led wellness programs on patient engagement and health behaviors. The study aimed to gain in-depth insights into patients' experiences and perceptions regarding these programs.

Participants: A purposive sampling approach was used to select participants from a tertiary hospital that implemented pharmacist-led wellness programs. A total of 30 patients were recruited for the study, chosen based on their active participation in the wellness programs. Inclusion criteria included adults aged 18 and older who had been involved in at least one wellness program. Exclusion criteria were patients unable to provide informed consent or those with significant cognitive impairments.

Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews: Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant. The interviews were designed to explore the following areas:

- **Experiences with the Wellness Program:** Participants' experiences with various components of the program, including educational sessions, goal setting, and follow-up consultations.
- **Perceptions of the Pharmacist's Role:** Participants' views on the pharmacist's role in the program, including the support and guidance provided.
- **Impact on Health Behaviors:** How participation in the program influenced their engagement in health-promoting behaviors and overall health management.

Interview guides were developed to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility to explore emergent topics. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent.

Focus Groups: In addition to individual interviews, two focus group discussions were conducted with groups of 6-8 participants each. The focus groups aimed to gather collective insights and foster discussions about shared experiences and perceptions. The focus groups were moderated by the lead researcher and were audio-recorded.

Data Analysis

Transcription and Coding: Interview and focus group recordings were transcribed verbatim. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved:

- **Familiarization with the Data:** Reading and re-reading transcripts to become acquainted with the content.
- **Generating Initial Codes:** Identifying and coding significant segments of data related to participants' experiences and perceptions.
- **Searching for Themes:** Organizing codes into potential themes and subthemes.
- **Reviewing Themes:** Refining and finalizing themes to ensure they accurately represent the data.
- **Defining and Naming Themes:** Clearly defining each theme and its relevance to the research questions.

Validation : To enhance the credibility of the findings, member checking was employed. A subset of participants reviewed the preliminary findings to confirm the accuracy and resonance of the themes identified. Additionally, peer debriefing was conducted with colleagues to ensure the validity of the analysis.

Ethical Considerations: The study was approved by the ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Confidentiality was maintained through anonymization of data and secure storage.

Limitations : The study's limitations include potential selection bias due to the purposive sampling method and the subjective nature of qualitative data analysis. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating a larger and more diverse sample and using multiple data sources to enhance the robustness of the findings.

Findings

The qualitative analysis revealed several key themes related to the impact of pharmacist-led wellness programs on patient engagement and health behaviors. The themes and subthemes, supported by participant responses, are detailed below.

1. Enhanced Health Knowledge and Awareness

1.1. Increased Understanding of Health Conditions: Participants reported a significant improvement in their understanding of their health conditions due to the educational content provided in the wellness programs.

- **Participant A:** "Before joining the program, I knew very little about my diabetes. The pharmacist explained things in a way that was easy to understand, and now I feel more confident in managing my condition."

1.2. Awareness of Health Resources: Many participants appreciated the information about available health resources and how to access them.

- **Participant B:** "The program introduced me to local support groups and online resources that I didn't know existed. It's been really helpful in managing my hypertension."

2. Improved Health Behaviors

2.1. Increased Adherence to Medication Regimens: Participants noted a positive change in their adherence to prescribed medication regimens as a result of the pharmacist's support and reminders.

- **Participant C:** "I used to forget to take my medication regularly, but the follow-up calls from the pharmacist have helped me stay on track."

2.2. Adoption of Healthy Lifestyle Changes: The program also encouraged participants to adopt healthier lifestyle choices, such as improved diet and increased physical activity.

- **Participant D:** "I've started exercising more and eating healthier since joining the program. The goal-setting sessions with the pharmacist really motivated me."

3. Positive Perceptions of the Pharmacist's Role

3.1. Personalized Support and Guidance: Participants valued the personalized attention and guidance provided by the pharmacists.

- **Participant E:** "The one-on-one sessions with the pharmacist made me feel like my health concerns were taken seriously. Their advice was tailored to my specific needs."

3.2. Building Trust and Rapport: The rapport developed with the pharmacist was frequently highlighted as a key factor in the program's success.

- **Participant F:** "I felt comfortable discussing my health issues with the pharmacist. They were supportive and understanding, which made a big difference."

4. Barriers and Challenges

4.1. Accessibility Issues: Some participants faced challenges with accessing the wellness programs due to scheduling conflicts or transportation issues.

- **Participant G:** "It was sometimes difficult to attend the sessions because of my work schedule. I wish there were more flexible options."

4.2. Initial Skepticism: A few participants initially expressed skepticism about the program's effectiveness but later reported positive outcomes.

- **Participant H:** "I wasn't sure if the program would help at first, but seeing the results has changed my mind. It's been really beneficial."

5. Suggestions for Improvement

5.1. Enhanced Program Flexibility: Participants suggested that increasing the flexibility of program scheduling could improve participation.

- **Participant I:** "Offering sessions at different times or providing virtual options could make it easier for people with busy schedules to join."

5.2. Expanded Content Coverage: There were recommendations for including more diverse health topics and interactive elements in the program.

- **Participant J:** "It would be great if the program could cover more topics or include more interactive activities to keep participants engaged."

Discussion

The findings from this qualitative study provide valuable insights into the experiences of patients participating in pharmacist-led wellness programs and highlight their impact on patient engagement and health behaviors. The study identified several key themes that elucidate the effectiveness and challenges of these programs.

Enhanced Health Knowledge and Awareness: Participants in this study reported a marked improvement in their understanding of health conditions and available resources. This aligns with previous research that underscores the importance of educational interventions in enhancing patient knowledge and self-management (Barnason et al., 2017). By increasing patients' awareness of their health conditions and resources, pharmacist-led wellness programs contribute to better health outcomes and informed decision-making.

Improved Health Behaviors: The study highlights significant positive changes in health behaviors among participants, including increased adherence to medication regimens and adoption of healthier lifestyle choices. These findings are consistent with literature showing that targeted interventions, such as those led by pharmacists, can effectively improve medication adherence and promote healthier behaviors (Wong et al., 2013). The personalized support provided by pharmacists likely plays a crucial role in facilitating these behavioral changes.

Positive Perceptions of the Pharmacist's Role: Participants expressed a strong appreciation for the personalized support and rapport developed with pharmacists. This underscores the value of the pharmacist-patient relationship in enhancing program effectiveness. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of trust and personalized care in achieving positive health outcomes (Esmalipour et al., 2021). The ability of pharmacists to offer tailored guidance and support is a significant factor in the success of wellness programs.

Barriers and Challenges: Despite the positive outcomes, the study identified several barriers, including accessibility issues and initial skepticism. These challenges are consistent with findings from other research on health program participation, which often highlights logistical and perceptual barriers (Robinson, 2021). Addressing these barriers by offering more flexible scheduling and virtual options could enhance program accessibility and engagement.

Suggestions for Improvement: Participants suggested improvements such as increased program flexibility and expanded content coverage. These recommendations reflect the need for programs to adapt to diverse patient needs and preferences. Tailoring program delivery to fit patients' schedules and incorporating a broader range of health topics could further enhance program effectiveness (Jordan et al., 2008).

Implications for Practice: The findings of this study suggest that pharmacist-led wellness programs are effective in improving patient engagement and health behaviors. To maximize the impact of these programs, pharmacists should continue to provide personalized support, address barriers to participation, and incorporate feedback from participants to refine program content and delivery.

Future Research: Future research should focus on quantifying the impact of pharmacist-led wellness programs on long-term health outcomes and exploring ways to enhance program accessibility. Additionally, studies could investigate the cost-effectiveness of these programs and their impact on overall healthcare utilization.

Conclusion

In conclusion, pharmacist-led wellness programs play a vital role in improving patient engagement and health behaviors. By addressing barriers, leveraging the pharmacist-patient relationship, and incorporating patient feedback, these programs can be further optimized to meet the needs of diverse patient populations and contribute to better health outcomes.

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