

Private vs. public pharmacist: Patients' experience on medication counselling

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The provision of standard medication counselling points by pharmacists is crucial in ensuring optimal service delivery. This study aimed to evaluate patients' experience towards medication counselling services provided by public and private pharmacists. **Methods:** This cross-sectional study involving patients aged 18 years and above who have received medication counselling services from both sectors' pharmacists, was conducted at 14 government hospitals and 11 health clinics in Perak, in 2021-2022. Demography and patients' experience with medication counselling by both sectors' pharmacists were collected using a self-administered questionnaire. **Results:** A total of 428 subjects joined this study. Their median age was 46 (IQR: 24) years. The majority were Malay, female, civil servants and had tertiary education as the highest education level. The majority always obtained medications from government hospitals, followed by community pharmacies, health clinics and private clinics. More patients reported that public pharmacists always fulfil medication counselling points, than private pharmacists, across 30 items ($p < 0.001$). More patients (89.5%) reported that public pharmacists always identify the prescription's owner's name, compared to private pharmacists (56.1%). Moreover, more patients reported that public pharmacists always review prescriptions before discussion (75.7% vs. 51.4%), and emphasize medication completion needs (68.4% vs. 44.6%), compared to private pharmacists ($p < 0.001$). Only 40.2% of public pharmacists and 27.3% of private pharmacists always self-introduce before discussion. **Conclusion:** Public pharmacists have higher adherence to the medication counselling points compared to private pharmacists, from patients' experience. The gaps in medication counselling services, provide an opportunity to build a collaborative bridge between public and private pharmacists.