Collaborative working relationships between family physicians and pharmacists: changes over time as pharmacists integrated into family practice


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Background: Collaborative working relationships (CWR) may be influenced by many factors as health care professionals learn to work together in the primary care setting. This study used a quantitative questionnaire to evaluate change over time and predictors of change as pharmacists integrated into family practice settings.

Methods: A CWR questionnaire validated with family physicians and community pharmacists (covering a variety of participant variables, professional interactions, exchange characteristics and collaborative practice) was administered at 3 and 12 months. Family physicians completed the questionnaires considering their practice pharmacist and pharmacists completed questionnaires regarding each physician with whom they worked. Paired sample T tests were conducted for physician-completed questionnaires. Effect sizes were calculated for each pharmacist and meta-analytically combined. Hierarchical linear regression analysis was performed to identify significant predictors of collaborative relationship development.

Results: Response rate was 87% and 88% for the two survey administration times. Paired sample T test revealed significant increase in physicians’ collaborative practice score (P<0.05) over time. Regression analyses showed significant predictors (e.g. role specification) of the development of collaborative working relationships at the 12 month point. Meta-analytically combined effect sizes of the pharmacist-completed questionnaires showed small positive effects in four variables and a large negative effect in one variable.

Conclusion: We successfully used this questionnaire to measure CWR between pharmacists and physicians, working together in family practice and to evaluate change over time. Role specification as a predictive factor of CWR development highlights the importance of clear roles and responsibilities as pharmacists integrate into family practice.

Keywords: Pharmacist, family medicine, quantitative questionnaire