
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Skin cancer counselling by Belgian community pharmacists

23rd International Conference on Integrated Care, Antwerp, Flanders, 22-24 May 2023

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Background: Skin cancer is a leading form of cancer in Belgium. The increasing incidence and associated economic and societal burden require more investments in population-based prevention strategies. Pharmacists can play a role in increasing awareness and promoting sun protection given their expertise and proximity. However, which persons could be reached by community pharmacists for skin cancer awareness in Belgium is unknown. Moreover, whether this increased awareness is associated with increased sun protection remains unclear. Therefore, we aimed to describe the population reached and potential impact on sun protection purchases among persons who received skin cancer counseling by their community pharmacist.

Methods: Demographics of approached persons in Flemish community pharmacies during the months May-June 2022, and the content of the skin cancer counseling were retrieved from the pharmacy database. Sun protection purchases and dermatologist visits (indirectly retrieved through prescriptions by a dermatologist) were evaluated up to three months after the skin cancer counseling.

Results: Community pharmacists provided skin cancer counseling to a broad population of visitors (n= 822, 69% females, interquartile range 44 to 71 years old). During the campaign, 822 visitors received a leaflet with skin cancer prevalence and sun protection importance. On top of that, 335 visitors (41%) received additional counseling content. Skin type sensitivity was checked and sun protection recommended at 267 visitors (32%). Typical characteristics of melanoma were discussed with 118 visitors (14%) and 37 visitors (5%) were referred to a physician for further information or due to a skin spot. Overall, one out of three visitors purchased a sun protection product (32%) on the day of the counseling (increasing up to 42% after three months). During three months follow-up, visitors receiving additional counseling had a higher chance to visit a dermatologist compared to those only receiving the leaflet (HR=1.8 ; p<0.05).

Conclusions: By providing skin cancer counseling in Belgian community pharmacies, a broad range of predominantly female citizens was reached and triggered to purchase sun protection, with increased dermatology visits for those receiving additional counseling.

Funding: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Acknowledgements

The authors want to thank the Flemish Pharmacists Network (VAN) for training the pharmacists and Farmaflux and Association of Pharmacists Belgium (APB) for providing the data with special acknowledgements to Karel Verlinde, An Vanthienen, Corine De Winter and Marc Buckens.