

## POSTER ABSTRACT

# **The role of pharmacists in the detection and referral of patients with unmet psychosocial care needs: lessons from a Flemish collaboration between community pharmacy and psychosocial work**

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Community pharmacists are highly accessible care providers who are well-embedded in the community and usually have a close relationship with their patients. This places them in a good position to detect unmet psychosocial needs and refer patients to the psychosocial care services in their neighborhood. Therefore, a collaboration between community pharmacists and a psychosocial care organization was set up in Flanders (BE) to explore the potential role of pharmacists in the detection and referral of patients with psychosocial needs. The aim is to reach a patient population with (unmet) psychosocial needs, such as mental health problems, financial issues, family problems, substance abuse, domestic violence,... There is special attention to vulnerable groups. These needs are captured during patient visits to a community pharmacy for standard care. Pharmacists were trained by an e-learning in the topic of psychosocial wellbeing to detect unmet needs, talk about personal problems and how to help and refer these patients.

This project is named #CAVAasa and is a collaboration between the Flemish network of pharmacists (VAN), the Flemish centers for general wellbeing (CAW) and the universities of Antwerp and Leuven. All parties worked together through all stages of the project. Sponsoring is provided by the Flemish Government. The project is currently running, and a total of 200 pharmacists are participating. Quantitative data are collected through an online registration form filled in by pharmacists. Collection started in July 2022 and is still running until January 2023. Physical meetings were held as well to share experiences between pharmacists and the social workers and to provide extra support if needed.

Since the start of the registration in July 2022 until today, a total of 160 patient contacts were registered in which psychosocial wellbeing was discussed. More details about the nature of these contacts will be available at the moment of the conference. During focus group discussions prior to this data collection, pharmacists indicated that they are willing to take up this role because patient wellbeing and personal assistance are key values of community pharmacy. It can be concluded that structural collaborations between community pharmacy and psychosocial care are very valuable and should be further supported. #CAVAasa is a good example of integrated care in which a whole person approach is supported, as it targets not only mental health care needs, but also broader social needs such as poverty and loneliness.

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Evaluation of the quantitative data is planned for January 2023. Results will be discussed during a multidisciplinary closing conference in which all stakeholders will be involved. After this evaluation, it is our goal to further expand this initiative to all of Flanders and make the collaboration between pharmacists and social workers more sustainable.