

The significance of community pharmacies' services beyond dispensing separation: A rapid scoping review

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The debate on dispensing separation (DS) for community pharmacists in Malaysia has persisted for decades. With community pharmacists shifting from dispensing to providing patient care, they are now positioned to develop innovative pharmacy practices and deliver care services, even in the absence of DS. **Objective:** This rapid scoping review aims to explore alternative initiatives that community pharmacies can adopt beyond DS by incorporating recent reviews and determining whether these initiatives positively impact patient health outcomes, medication management, and quality of life. **Materials and Methods:** A systematic literature search was executed on SCOPUS, Web of Science (WOS), and PubMed databases from inception to April 23, 2023. The search identified recent reviews and observational studies on community pharmacy initiatives beyond DS. Inclusion criteria were studies set in community pharmacies, focused on community pharmacists, published in English from 2018 to 2023, and available in full-text. **Results:** Nineteen studies were included; 15 reviews, 1 pilot RCT, and 3 observational studies (cross-sectional, cohort, and multicentre descriptive). Key initiatives highlighted were medication reviews and educational counseling in 9 studies, followed by specialized care for specific conditions such as anticoagulation management, minor ailments, epilepsy, chronic pain, obesity, medicine and alcohol consultation, and chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, hypertension). Additionally, 3 studies emphasized the expanded role of pharmacists during public health emergencies. Overall, these initiatives resulted in improved medication adherence, reduced drug-related problems (DRPs), enhanced detection of adverse drug reactions (ADRs), optimized chronic disease therapy, and better patient health outcomes. **Conclusion:** Although DS is not currently implemented in Malaysia, community pharmacists can thrive by focusing on patient-centered care, covering medication optimization, chronic and acute care management, and patient education, offering indispensable services in the evolving healthcare landscape.