

Community Pharmacists Interview

Topic Guide

Study ID

A mixed methods study of the community pharmacy workforce's preparedness for, and response to, the COVID-19 pandemic

COMMUNITY PHARMACIST INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

Introduction

"Hello, my name is Susan Patterson and I am a researcher from the School of Pharmacy, Queen's University Belfast. Thank you very much for making the time to speak with me today.

Have you had a chance to read through the information sheet that was sent out to you? Would you like me to read you a short summary? Are there any questions that you would like to ask me before we start?"

Optional section to read if the pharmacist hasn't read the participant information sheet

"In this research project, we are interested in finding out about the community pharmacy workforce's preparedness for, and response to, the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first part of this project, we reviewed various documents relating to structural changes to community pharmacy practice (i.e. infrastructure, funding/resourcing, legislation, policies and guidelines) in Northern Ireland in preparation for and/or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the second part we contacted 130 community pharmacists in Northern Ireland by telephone and asked them to complete a short questionnaire about how they prepared for and responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. You participated in this stage and expressed an interest in taking part in the next stage of the study. Now we are speaking to a range of key stakeholders to further explore perspectives and reflections on the community pharmacy workforce's preparedness for, and response to COVID-19, including lessons for future public health crises. We will be exploring the views and experiences of community pharmacists in more detail and will also be interviewing representatives of patients, the pharmacy and medical professions, policy makers and service commissioners."

Explaining what will happen in the interview and afterwards

"I will be recording the interview on a digital recorder, to ensure that we have an accurate and detailed record of what you say. The recording will be saved on a password-protected computer and only those immediately involved in the research study and a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will be able to listen to it. The recording will be typed up word-for-word and any names, locations, or anything else that could identify you will be removed so that the information is anonymous. After we have conducted interviews with all participants, we will analyse the information within the research team. The interview should last approximately 40 minutes. You are free to stop

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the interview and/or recording at any point. If there are any questions that you would prefer not to answer, just let me know and we can move on to the next question.”

Consent

“Before we start, I need to obtain your consent to ensure that you understand what the study involves; that anything you say will be kept completely confidential, that you will not be identified in any way, and also that you are happy for the interview to be recorded.”

If the interview is conducted in person: *“Can you please read through the consent form (Appendix 1) and initial each box to indicate that you understand and agree with each statement, before signing and dating the form? There are two copies: you will keep one of them and I will keep the other for our records.”*

[Turn the digital recorder on]

[Consent form – see Appendix 1]

If the interview is conducted by telephone: *“I will now read you a series of statements about the study (Appendix 1) which I would like you to respond to with either “Yes” or “No”. I will audio-record and note your responses on the consent form.”*

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- How would you sum up your experience of the pandemic while working in community pharmacy?
 - How prepared did you feel?
 - How did your experience change over time?
 - What worked well?
 - What worked less well?

- What do you think were the biggest challenges that the community pharmacy profession has faced during the pandemic?
(Prompts¹: protection of pharmacy workforce, concerns about staff illness, staff isolation, risk of pharmacy closure, financial difficulties, essential medicines stock shortages, public panic, GP closure, provision of COVID advice)

- Did the nature of your interactions with the public change during the pandemic?
 - How do you think the public perceived community pharmacists during the pandemic?
 - How do you think public expectations of community pharmacy could be managed in a future pandemic?

- Responses from the telephone questionnaire indicated that during the current pandemic, some pharmacists had some negative experiences with the public. What was your experience?
(Prompts: aggressive behaviour, panic/anxiety, stockpiling)
 - Were there any common issues or problems that arose?
 - What was the impact on you and your staff?
 - Do you have any thoughts on how this could be avoided in a future pandemic?
(Prompts: communication with GPs, advance information provided to the public re. changes to the Rx process)

- Do you think the public received sufficient information about COVID-19 from community pharmacy?
(Prompts: infection control, symptoms and usual course of the disease, testing, contact tracing, seeking help, accessing medicines)

¹ The researcher will rephrase the question if necessary and not verbalise these as far as possible to avoid leading the interviewee

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- How do you think the core role of the community pharmacist changed over the course of the pandemic?

- In what areas do you think community pharmacy has made the biggest contributions to the healthcare response to COVID-19?

- Do you think that there are any areas where community pharmacy could have been more actively involved or made a greater contribution during the healthcare response to COVID-19?
 - What would have been needed to facilitate this?

- Can you tell me about any changes to your practice/services as a pharmacist that occurred as a result of the pandemic that you would like to see remain in place?
(Prompt: Flu vaccination services, COVID-19 vaccination services, text alerts, change in methods of service delivery to maintain social distance e.g. video consultations, telephone calls and medicines pick up)
 - What would you **not** like to see remain in place?

- What were your experiences of working with local healthcare professionals across the NHS during the pandemic?
 - How did they perceive community pharmacists?
 - Did relationships change? (If so, in what way?)

- How do you think the pandemic will affect your working relationship with local healthcare professionals going forward?

- How do you think healthcare professionals' expectations of community pharmacy could be managed in a future pandemic?

- COVID-19-related information for pharmacists on a number of topics, i.e. clinical, business and financial matters, came from several different sources during the course of the pandemic, e.g. BSO website, HSCB e-mails, Department of Health letters, CPNI. What did you think about the COVID-19 information that was available to you? (Prompts: Quality, volume, frequency of distribution, evidence base, source)
 - What areas were covered well?
 - Was there anything in terms of information provision that could have been done differently?

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- How helpful was the business support you received from professional bodies / government departments? [*may not be relevant to employee pharmacists*] (Prompt e.g. financial support, permission to change opening hours, temporary pharmaceutical register)
 - Did you receive the support that you needed? (If not, can you tell me more about this?)
 - What was good about the support you received?
 - *For employee pharmacists:* Were there any areas of support you felt were lacking for you as an employee pharmacist?

- How do you think community pharmacy could prepare for a future pandemic or health care crisis?
(Prompts: Business continuity / staffing – cross sectoral working, Communication strategies, Advance disaster planning, Guidance for pharmacy contractors on how to manage during a pandemic, Training – community pharmacists + staff?, Training in locality – multidisciplinary? Modernising prescription medicines processes and structures)

- How much autonomy should there be for healthcare professionals such as community pharmacists to exercise their own professional judgement in the decisions or actions that they take during an emergency situation such as a pandemic?
(Prompts: controlled drugs storage, emergency medicines legislation)

- What has been the single biggest learning point for you about your role as a community pharmacist from the pandemic so far?

Closing the interview

“That brings us to the end of the interview.

Is there anything else about community pharmacy and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that you feel has not been covered or that you would like to discuss before we finish up?

Do you have any additional comments you would like to make as to the content of the interview or how it went?

Thank you very much for making the time to speak with me today.”

[Turn the digital recorder off]

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Appendix 1: Interview participant consent form

**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST****School of Pharmacy**Medical Biology Centre
97 Lisburn Rd
Belfast BT9 7BL
Tel: 028 90972007
Fax: 028 90247794**INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM****STUDY ID****Study Title: The community pharmacy workforce's preparedness for, and response to, the COVID-19 pandemic****Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read, or had read to me, and understand the information sheet dated 10/02/2021 (version 1.0) for the above study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and these have been answered fully.

2. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.

3. I understand, and agree to, the interview being digitally audio recorded.

4. I understand that direct quotations from the interview may be used in reports and papers, but that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained, and it will not be possible to identify me from any publications.

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5. I understand that the researcher may share the pseudonymised audio-recordings with a transcription company and that the company will destroy the recording as soon as the transcription has been checked.

6. I understand that what is discussed during the interview is confidential.

7. I understand that the study is being conducted by researchers from Queen's University Belfast and that my personal information (including consent forms) will be held securely on University premises (in the School of Pharmacy) and handled in accordance with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (2018).

8. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

(Please print)

SUSAN PATTERSON

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

(Please print)

Date

Signature

When completed: A signed copy of this form can be returned by e-mail to susan.patterson@qub.ac.uk or by post to Dr Susan Patterson, at the address above. Please retain a copy for your personal records.

Thank you for your participation in this research.