Abstract

Objectives: ‘Self Care’ cards play a significant role in delivering health education via community pharmacies in Australia and New Zealand. The primary objective of this study was to evaluate whether such an initiative could have a similar impact in an Irish context. The secondary objective was to understand the importance of health literacy to this initiative. Methods: Ten cards were developed for the Irish healthcare setting and trialed as a proof of concept study. The pilot study ran in ten community pharmacies in the greater Cork area for a six-month period. Using a mixed methods approach (Questionnaires & focus group) staff and patient reactions to the initiative were obtained. Concurrent to the pilot study, readability scores of cards (Flesch-Kincaid, Fry, SMOG methods) and the Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine (REALM) health literacy screening tool was administered to a sample of patients. Results: 88.7% of patient respondents (n=53) liked the concept of the ‘Self Care’ cards and 83% of respondents agreed that the use of the card was beneficial to their understanding of their ailment. Focus groups with Pharmacy staff highlighted the importance of appropriate training for the future development of this initiative. An emerging theme from designing the cards was health literacy. The pilot ‘Self Care cards were pitched at too high a literacy level for the general Irish public to understand as determined by readability score methods. It was found that 19.1% of a sample population (n=199) was deemed to have low health literacy skills. Conclusion: The ‘Self Care’ initiative has the potential to be Pharmacy’s contribution to health education in Ireland. The initiative needs to be cognizant of the health literacy framework that equates the skills of individuals to the demands placed upon them.

Keywords

Health Literacy, Comprehension, Community Pharmacy Services, Ireland.