

Challenges in medication safety experienced by employees and managers in Danish municipalities – a qualitative study



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A study mapping the challenges of medicine-related tasks in Danish municipalities. The results will contribute to the discussion of how pharmacy technicians from community pharmacies can support medication safety in the municipalities in cooperation with municipal employees.

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Background

66 % of the registered unintentional accidents from 2017 to 2019 in municipal institutions such as nursing homes, home care and residential facilities are due to medicine management according to a report from the Danish Patient Safety Authority. Until now no studies have identified how different municipal employees and managers experience medicine-related tasks, and which challenges they face.

Purpose

The aim of the study was to map challenges with medicine-related tasks in the municipalities identified by municipal managers and further explored by municipal employees. The aim of the study was also to use the results in investigating how pharmacy technicians from community pharmacies (CP) can contribute to strengthening medication safety in the municipalities.

Methods

Semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews with two-three municipal managers from ten different municipalities were conducted. Six themes were identified from these interviews, and explored by visual storytelling by municipal employees. All interviews were transcribed verbatim before conducting a content analysis using NVivo version 13. The results were presented at a workshop with stakeholders where pharmacy technicians from CP contribution to medication safety in municipalities was discussed.

Results

Examples from the visual storytelling interviews with municipal employees about challenges concerning medication:



Photo 1
Many employees with different competencies and skills help the patient and need to work together and use the right skill for the right task.

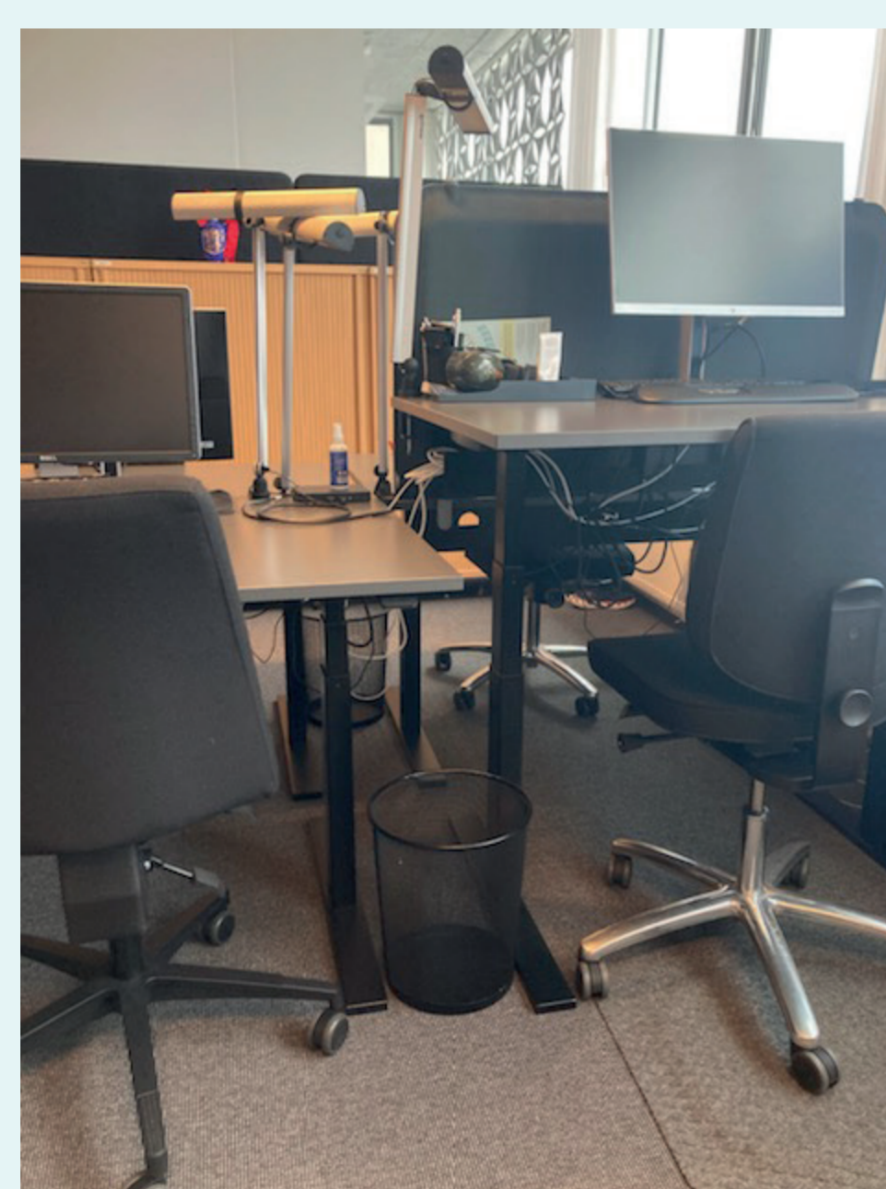


Photo 2
Patients feel that they fall between two chairs in the health care system.



Photo 3
It can be difficult for a home care nurse to follow procedures in the management and administration of medicines because of mess in the patient's home.

The following themes were identified from interviews with 27 municipal managers and visual storytelling with 17 municipal employees:

1. Challenges in several steps of the medication process.
2. Compliance with existing procedures and instructions related to medication handling is difficult.
3. Observation of effects and side effects of medicine in patients in nursing homes, home care and residential facilities can be difficult.
4. Medicine during transitions is a challenge.
5. Medicine-related issues in disease-preventing and health-promoting activities at municipal health centres.
6. The right competence for the right task.
7. Municipal managers and some employees are worried about whether the employees who solve medicine-related tasks always have the right qualifications to do so.



Figure 1: The ideas of how community pharmacy technicians can contribute to medicine safety in the municipalities at a workshop with stakeholders.

At the workshop with stakeholders, results were presented and stakeholders generated ideas on how pharmacy technicians from CP can contribute to strengthening medication safety in municipalities (figure 1)

Conclusion

This study identified themes that illustrate the challenges of medicine-related tasks as experienced by municipal managers and employees and generated ideas for how pharmacy technicians from CP can contribute to medication safety in municipalities. The ideas will be further qualified by The Danish Association of Pharmaconomists and The Association of Danish Pharmacies, who will also decide if one or more of the ideas will be tested in a future study.