

A mixed-methods evaluation of an education programme on mentalisation for community pharmacy workforce in Denmark to promote patient-centred counselling

Authors

GR Husted¹, D Hassan¹, LH Bruun¹, L Poulsen¹, BH Hansen¹, D Drivsholm¹, GK Kristensen¹, KM Gommesen¹, LF Nymark¹, CV Rossing¹

¹Pharmakon
Danish College of Pharmacy Practice
Milnersvej 42 – 3400 Hillerød
Denmark

Contact information

Gitte Reventlov Husted
grh@pharmakon.dk



A patient-centred mindset promotes job-satisfaction and resilience among course participants

Background

Pharmakon offers to the Danish pharmacy workforce an education programme on mentalising skills¹⁻³ to support patient-centred counselling. It comprises three different courses (figure 1).

Mentalising Pharmacies

– a training programme for community pharmacies

Course for experts

Seven modules divided into 20 hours of physical attendance and 16 hours of online modules (2.5 ECTS), during a four-month period.

Course for leaders

A two-day course. Introduction to the mentalising mindset and mentalising communication and how to implement a patient-centred approach.

Course for all pharmacy staff

A one-day course. Introduction to the mentalising mindset and mentalising communication and practical exercises focusing on patient-centred counselling.

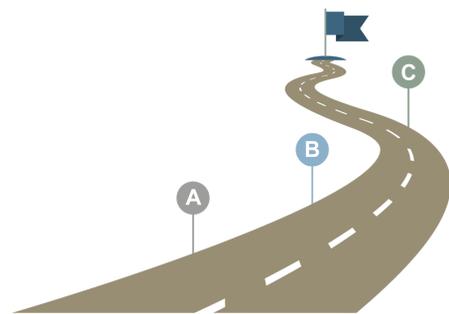


Figure 1: Illustration of the three different courses.

Purpose

To evaluate whether the education programme promotes a patient-centred mindset and how that will manifest itself in the daily practice in community pharmacies.

Methods

A mixed-method design.

The 12-item Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SE-12) measures patient-centred communication skills. The 20-item Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS) measures mentalising skills. Data was collected before and after the programme. Analysed descriptively and using an unpaired t-test.

The qualitative data comprised written reports answered upon completing course A and analysed thematically.

Data from participants' evaluation of courses A, B and C was included in the evaluation.

¹ C. Fosgerau et al.; Programme description: A mentalising education programme for community pharmacy workforce. *Pharmacy Education*, Vol. 22 No. 1 (2022)

² G.R. Husted et al.; A mixed methods evaluation of a mentalising education programme for the community pharmacy workforce in Denmark – A promising way forward to deliver patient-centred counselling. *Pharmacy Education*, Vol. 23 No. 1 (2023)

³ N.B. Mottelson et al.; Changes in community pharmacy communication – Towards emotional awareness at the pharmacy counter. *PEC Innovation*, Vol. 6, 2025

Results

Patient-centred communication skills

(Self-Efficacy Questionnaire) measured at baseline and after among participants from two community pharmacies completed courses A, B, C.

Participants	Baseline N (median, min-max)	End of programme N (median, min-max)	p-value
Two community pharmacies Course A, B, C	N=33 7.00 (4.64-9.14)	N=27 7.86 (5.33-9.67)	0.03*

Responses were recorded on a 10-point response scale that ranged from 1 (very uncertain) to 10 (very certain). The total scores range from 12 to 120. (Ref. Axbøe et al. BMC medical education 2016).

The results show a **significant** change in patient-centred communication skills and complement the qualitative findings.

Theme 1: New skills create patient-centred dialogues

The programme has an impact on patient-centred dialogues, as illustrated by these three quotes.

The customers are no different from before – I'm the one who's now better at starting a good dialogue and creating a sense of safety. That results in completely different conversations with customers than those I had before I took the course.

The various models and tools have given me the courage to ask for clarification and to ask more probing questions. When I ask open questions, I let customers take the lead on what they want to share and what their needs are.

I've become better at giving customers space and listening to what they're actually saying. I've also learned that I don't need to provide a solution to everything and that my perception of what's most important isn't necessarily what the customer perceives as most important.

Emotional Awareness

(Toronto Alexithymia Scale)

(Ref. Bagby et al. J. Psychosom Res 1994).

The scale was not sensitive to changes in the participants' emotional awareness (p=0.52) measured at baseline and after ending the programme among participants from course A (the experts).

Theme 2: Not taking customers' emotions in

The programme has an impact on emotional awareness, as illustrated by these three quotes:

I've become more aware of how I'm feeling myself. At the same time, I think I've gained a greater understanding of customers.

Now it's easier for me to understand why I react the way I do at the counter, and that helps me to create a safe environment at the counter.

Customers' emotions no longer transfer onto me as they used to. So I don't have as many grumpy, annoying customers anymore.

Theme 3: Improved job satisfaction and resilience

The programme also seems to contribute positively to job satisfaction, as illustrated by these three quotes:

It's given me much greater job satisfaction. I have a clear sense that customers leave the pharmacy much happier and feel they've received better service.

There's been a significant increase in our customer satisfaction surveys from last spring to this year, after we've worked with mentalisation. I feel that the emotions I have when I go home after a day at work are now more positive and satisfactory.

It's become easier to go to work. Overall, it's brought more calmness – especially when it comes to interactions at the counter and any conflicts with colleagues.

Results from evaluations of course A, B, C

The course evaluations complement the other results illustrated by this quote:

Really good content that starts with us as people and then moves on to how we can use it in our counter service. I learned to focus on the customer's situation and what mentalisation can do.

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Conclusion

The results illustrate that participating in the programme promotes a patient-centred mindset through increased awareness of mentalisation and that it significantly improves patient-centred communication skills. In addition, staff experience more work satisfaction and feel more resilient.

Future

The education programme will run until the end of 2026. So far 42 community pharmacies have completed the programme, and 18 community pharmacies are currently taking the programme. The University of Copenhagen and the University of Southern Denmark teach students mentalising and patient-centred communication as a permanent part of their education. Pharmakon is planning to develop an international course on mentalisation – please contact grh@pharmakon.dk to find out more.