

USE OF ANTIBIOTICS AND RESISTANCES: PHARMACISTS' ATTITUDES – A FOCUS GROUP STUDY

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: This study sought to identify pharmacists' knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and experiences in what concerns antibiotics and resistances.

METHODS: Qualitative research in the form of focus groups. Focus groups were conducted with 4-7 pharmacists, using a moderator. Participants were informed about the study and then they have signed an informed consent. A topic guide was developed to lead the discussions, which were audio-recorded and transcribed. Study was carried out between December 2010 and March 2011 in the Northern Health Region of Portugal.

RESULTS: A total of 6 focus groups were conducted with pharmacists (n = 32). All pharmacists consider that there is an excessive use of antibiotics and there is still much demand without a prescription, especially for tooth infections and urinary infections. They considered that, actually, antibiotics dispensed without a prescription is falling because there is more pharmacists in pharmacies, comparing with 5-10 years ago. The main causes identified as responsible for the emergence of resistances were: self medication, patients' noncompliance, inappropriate antibiotic prescription, extensive use of newer generation of antibiotics and veterinary use. Pharmacists identified the lack of packages for a complete treatment and doctor's prescriptions by telephone as the main factors for remission of antibiotics without prescription. The strategies noted, by participants, to control emergence of bacterial resistance were: education programs for general public and health professionals, regulatory measures to prevent prescription of new molecules, more control on dispensing of antibiotics without prescription, more interaction between pharmacists and physicians and periodic determination of resistances in the community.

CONCLUSION: Pharmacists believe that antibiotic resistances are an important problem of public health and, overuse contributes to resistances. We think that pharmacists should take a more interventionist attitude to sensitize patients to the appropriate use of antibiotics and other public health issues. In our opinion this professional competence should be acquired during academic education.