

Healthcare Professionals and Their Perceptions of Medication Access Barriers

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Introduction

Medication access, deemed a right to health by the World Health Organization, is an individual's right to receive medicines needed for their health and wellbeing. Medication access barriers discussed in this study were identified using the Pharmacy Quality Alliance's Medication Access Patient Journey framework (MAPJ). These two barriers are Organizational Health Literacy and Insurance. The purpose of this study was to investigate healthcare professionals' knowledge, experiences, and perceptions of medication access and medication access barriers.

Methods

A 23 question survey was sent out to healthcare professionals (such as pharmacists, physicians, nurses etc.) who were eligible for the study. The survey was distributed through the social media website Facebook and Southern Illinois University Center of Family Medicine clinics in Illinois. The survey was open for eight weeks for participants to respond to the questions that gauged their knowledge, experiences, and perceptions about medication access barriers.

Results

For healthcare professionals knowledge and organizational health literacy's importance in healthcare, 58% were moderately or very knowledgeable and 93% reported organizational literacy was moderately or very important. For insurance, 61% of participants were moderately or very knowledgeable of Medicare/Medicaid and 58% for commercial/private insurance. 42% of participants were moderately or very confident working with Medicare/Medicaid and 58% were moderately or very confident working with commercial or private insurance. There were also many healthcare professionals who felt patient resources for medication access and the ability to evaluate these resources by employment sites were weak. Knowledge and confidence with working on certain insurance barriers like prior authorizations were on the lower side as well.

Conclusions

Healthcare professionals recognize the importance of organization health literacy and insurance in medication access but may have incomplete knowledge of these two barriers. There also may be needed improvement in designing and evaluating interventions healthcare systems offer for navigating the healthcare system, removing healthcare barriers, and promoting health literacy. Healthcare professionals also felt like they were knowledgeable about Medicare/Medicaid and commercial/private insurance but tended to be more confident working with commercial/private insurance. There also can be improvements made in educating and improving confidence when working with insurance formularies, insurance tier systems, and prior authorizations in order to promote medication access. Ultimately more education and practice for healthcare professionals may resolve some of these issues.