

Mutual recognition of medical prescriptions in the EU

An empirical exercise

L. San Miguel, R. Baeten, R. Remmen, R. Busse, J. Gil, C. Knai, M. Mäkinen, G. Rubert, M. McKee

Overall objective and approach

- To assess the acceptance by pharmacists of prescriptions issued in other member states
- To identify factors that influence the decision or willingness to dispense
- To facilitate a better understanding of the practical challenges involved in the dispensing of such prescriptions

In a mystery shopping exercise 192 prescriptions written in Belgium or Finland were presented in pharmacies in another member state (Belgium, Finland, Germany, Spain and the UK)

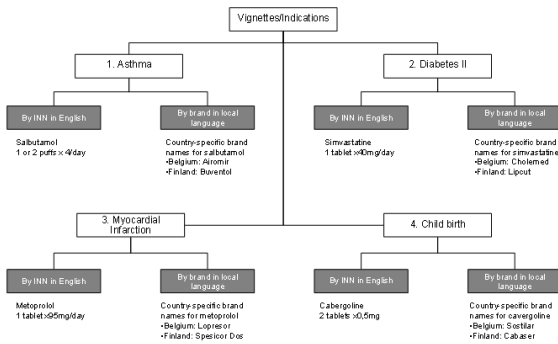


- Prescriptions were drafted for four common indications
 - Asthma
 - Type II diabetes
 - Child birth deliveries
 - Myocardial infarction

Sample size



Products used in prescriptions



Variables captured/analysed

The aim was to measure willingness to dispense and to assess whether this was independent (or not) of any of the following variables:

- Geographical area (i.e. central, outskirts or rural)
- Patient case (i.e. asthma, breast feeding, myocardial infarction and type II diabetes)
- Country of origin (i.e. Belgium or Finland)
- The type of prescription (i.e. drafted by brand in local language or drafted by molecule in English)
- Country where presented (i.e. Belgium, Finland, Germany, Spain or the UK).

Results (1/2)

	DISPENSED*	NOT DISPENSED	TOTAL PRESENTED	DISPENSED (%)
Type of Pharmacy				
Centre	36	28	64	56,25
Outskirts	33	31	64	51,56
Rural	31	33	64	48,44
Patient case				
Asthma	29	19	48	60,42
Myocardial infarction	25	23	48	52,08
Diabetes	26	22	48	54,17
Breast feeding	28	20	48	58,33
Country of origin				
Finnish**	55	41	96	57,29
Belgian**	53	43	96	55,21
Type of prescription				
Brand	40	56	96	41,67
Generic	58	28	96	70,83
Country where presented				
Belgium	16	8	24	66,67
England	14	34	48	29,17
Finland	8	16	24	33,33
Germany	38	10	48	79,17
Spain	32	16	48	66,67
TOTAL	108	84	192	56,25

Results (2/2)

Significant differences:

- In dispensing rates for prescriptions written by brand name versus INN (international non-proprietary name).
- In practices across the different countries with Belgium, Germany and Spain recognizing most of the prescriptions and England and Finland declining to dispense in most cases

Main reasons to refuse dispensation:

- In Finland and the UK
 - Most pharmacists believed that by law, they were not allowed to dispense by their national law
- In the remaining countries
 - The impossibility to recognize the product name written on the prescription, often a country-specific brand name

Conclusions and recommendations

- Having an enforceable law in place is not sufficient to change dispensers' behaviour
- Pharmacists are ready to dispense easy to identify, uncomplicated products
- The authentication of the prescription and prescriber does not seem to be an important issue
- There is a need for guidelines on when and how to dispense such prescriptions
- Encouraging INN prescribing could facilitate global product recognition.