

- A partnership of public health researchers across the five universities in North East England
- Focused on working with policy makers and practice partners
- A founding member of the NIHR School for Public Health Research (SPHR)
- A UK Public Health Research Centre of Excellence

Community pharmacy and public health: the perfect match?

Having easy access to good healthcare increases your chances of being healthy but who can provide what? Four Fuse supported research projects explore how community pharmacy can increase access to healthcare and reduce inequalities in health.

Fuse is contributing to the evidence on the link between community pharmacy and public health by supporting the following research projects:

- Systematically reviewing the effectiveness of community pharmacy delivered interventions.
- An area-level analysis of community pharmacy distribution and social deprivation.
- Evaluating a pilot in Sunderland using Alcohol Brief intervention in community pharmacies.
- Trialling a mood intervention in community pharmacy to treat adults with mild depression.

The first study reviewed controlled trials on community pharmacy interventions for smoking cessation, alcohol misuse and weight management. Nineteen studies were included from across the globe. Six studies were rated 'strong', four as 'moderate' and nine as 'weak' in terms of quality of evidence. The review identified a gap in evidence on alcohol-reduction interventions and the relationship to social deprivation.

Therefore, in the second study, a research team at Newcastle University used postcodes for all community pharmacies and GP practices in England and the coordinates of each postcode for the population. These were then matched to a deprivation index as well as to the type of area, e.g. urban, town and fringe, hamlet or isolated dwelling.

A third study by researchers at the University of Sunderland tested the use of Alcohol Brief Interventions in 14 local community pharmacies to promote awareness around the health risks of alcohol misuse. Using a scratch card quiz, community pharmacists provided brief personalised feedback

to people about their drinking. The pilot focused on men aged between 45-64 and was part of the national Drinkaware campaign 'Have a little less, feel a lot better', launched in January 2017.

The fourth study looks at mental health and is an ongoing trial to test whether a type of therapy, which helps people change the way that they think and behave (behavioural activation), could be successfully delivered by staff working in community pharmacies. The therapy aims to reduce symptoms of depression in adults with one or more long-term health conditions. The study is led by the Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys Foundation NHS Trust and the University of York, supported by the Fuse Health Inequalities research programme.

Key Findings

Systematic review of pharmacy-based interventions

- Most evidence focused on smoking cessation with little evidence on alcohol-reduction interventions.
- Behavioural support and/or nicotine replacement therapy were effective and cost-effective for stop smoking.
- Pharmacy-based interventions produced similar weight loss compared with interventions in other primary care settings and were similar in cost.

Area-level analysis looking at social deprivation

- More people live within a 20-minute walk of a community pharmacy than they do to a GP practice.
- 89 per cent of the population lived within easy walking distance of a pharmacy compared to 85 per cent for GPs.
- In deprived areas, the figures are even higher with 100 per cent easy access to pharmacies and 98 per cent to GP practices.
- The often-quoted inverse care law, where good medical care is most available to those who need it least, does not apply for community pharmacy.

Key Findings continued...

Alcohol Brief intervention pilot

- Alcohol Brief Interventions are a feasible, acceptable and flexible approach to incorporate challenging discussions about alcohol consumption with people in the day-to-day working of a community pharmacy in an unobtrusive way.
- Alcohol Brief Interventions in community pharmacies engage hard-to-reach groups, such as middle-aged men.
- Staff valued the light approach to training and the focus on learning from experience, although they reported less opportunities for pro-active engagement with people due to time constraints.

Community pharmacies mood intervention study

- Previous research found that a treatment called collaborative care reduced symptoms of depression and nearly halved the number of people who developed major depression in older adults with low levels of depression.
- A Healthy Living Advisor offers support sessions (15-20 minutes) in which participants are provided with information to help them think about their difficulties and what they may be able to do to improve some of them, including a self-help workbook.

“A patient can see a community pharmacist almost immediately without an appointment; they are often open during evenings and weekends, making them truly available to the public”

(New Statesman, 4-10 September 2015)



Photograph: Durham University

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

Fuse (the Centre for Translational Research in Public Health) organised a Quarterly Research Meeting (QRM) on community pharmacy and public health on 18 October 2017. The meeting brought together practice partners, policy-makers, commissioners, and academics to explore the role of community pharmacy in delivering public health services.

This brief demonstrates the range of possible interventions that community pharmacies can collaborate on with health practitioners and researchers. The event facilitated ongoing conversations between both sectors to inform the design, commissioning and evaluation of community-based public health interventions in North East England.

For more information please visit: www.fuse.ac.uk/events/fusequarterlyresearchmeetings

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Fuse is one of five UKCRC Public Health Research Centres of Excellence. It brings together public health researchers from across the five universities in North East England.

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