

Oral Health Promotion Grants Program

Final Report 2002

Project title

Improving Oral Health for Older People – an online initiative

Organisation

- Victorian College of Pharmacy, Monash University (the Pharmacy College)
- The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Victorian Branch (the PSAV)
- Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV)
- Aged Care Association (ACA)

Aim

Over recent years, considerable demand has been placed on community pharmacists to play a greater role in the provision of an integrated health service. This strategy particularly impacts on those pharmacists who service isolated and remote communities.

This project has been designed to assist community pharmacists adapt to this changing role by using the internet to deliver information on ways they can assist older people and their carers achieve better oral health.

Objectives

The project is designed to facilitate greater access to information that would allow community pharmacists to:

- identify ways to assist carers and older people to achieve better oral health outcomes
- provide proper advice on a range of products and the correct use of those products
- identify medicines that contain sugar and reduce saliva flow
- provide advice to providers of dental care services to carers and older people

Method

Findings from a research study (Stewart K, Gowan J, Reed B and Roller L, 1996) investigating issues associated with mandating continuing professional education (CPE) for community pharmacists, indicated that:

- two-thirds of respondents reported participation in at least 20 hours of CPE in the previous calendar year
- 68% reported difficulty in participating in CPE
- 21.3% indicated that geographic isolation was a major factor limiting participation in CPE
- a high percentage of participants inferred that an interactive and flexible continuing education was a high personal preference

It is accepted among health professionals that community pharmacists rate as the highest group to have computer and internet access. The Oral Health Promotion Grants Program, was identified by the Pharmacy College and the PSAV to fund the 'Improving Oral Health for Older People' online program, to establish the effectiveness of using web-based facilities to deliver information and education in an efficient and cost-effective way to assist community pharmacists in their role in the provision of an integrated health service for the broader community.

The project information is hosted on the Pharmacy College's website, found at <http://www.pharmace.vic.edu.au>.

Project barriers

The web-based project experienced a number of obstacles that impeded its capacity to deliver the outcomes to the extent expected by the management committee overseeing the project. These barriers included:

- accessing suitable sufficient information from manufacturers and/or suppliers of oral hygiene products on their respective products to provide the visual aesthetics necessary to enhance education outcomes of the project
- accessing suitable visual images on a range of oral health conditions and diseases that particularly impact on older people
- prohibitive cost associated with incorporating multi-media onto the web
- limited funding available from the Oral Health Promotion Grants Program
- the process required to receive approval from health professional associations to award CPE credit points
- securing financial support from the private sector to assist with ongoing maintenance and development

In addressing the above barriers, the Pharmacy College is investigating a long-term strategy that includes:

- working with the PSAV to access the range of oral health products stocked by community pharmacists to develop a substantial portfolio of oral health product images thereby reducing the reliance on manufacturers and/or suppliers
- establishing strategic alliances with peak organisations such as the Australian Dental Association, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Division of General Practice to receive the support and cooperation necessary to:
 - source images on the range of oral health conditions and diseases that impact on older people in a compatible electronic format
 - review the project information on a regular basis to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the information
- forging strategic alliances with the corporate sector to raise the necessary funding to assist with ongoing program maintenance and development

Evaluation and findings

The project can be evaluated from a macro and micro-perspective. From the macro-perspective, the project achieved its primary aim, namely to ‘deliver information on ways community pharmacists can assist older people and their carers achieve better oral health.’

This outcome can be substantiated by the following key performance indicators:

- the formal launch of the project by Matt Viney MP (Parliamentary Secretary for Human Services) on Friday 12 October 2001
- Media Release forwarded to 774 print, radio and television media outlets regarding the launch
- article placed in:
 - ADA Newsletter
 - Monash Memo
 - Pharmacy College Newsletter
 - VCP Alumni News
 - Rural Workforce Australia News

- cooperation and support provided by peak organisations and the private sector including:
 - Health Insurance Commission (HIC)
 - ADA
 - RACGP
 - Division of General Practice
 - Pharmaceutical Defence Limited (PDL)
 - Colgate Palmolive
 - Wriggley's
 - Oral B
 - Sigma
- approval by the RACGP and the PSA to award CPE points to their respective members who successfully complete the CPE requirements
- statistical information generated from the PharmaCE website hosting the program:
 - 60,000 screens have been viewed
 - 5,300 visitors have accessed the site
 - 720 visitors referred from other websites
 - 250 health professionals registering at the PharmaCE website

Of the number of health professionals who have registered at the PharmaCE website, the breakdown of professional is as follows:

- 53.72% community pharmacists
- 25.08 other
- 9.87% hospital pharmacists
- 4.89% nurses
- 4.21% general practitioners'
- 1.78% alternate therapists

To assist with the micro (user)-perspective, the program included an innovation that allowed site users to receive CPE credit points for completing:

- the fee-for-service assessment component; and
- an online survey (see Attachment 1)

To date, no surveys have been submitted and only one (1) community pharmacist has enrolled for the CPE assessment. Given the research findings Stewart K, Gowan J, Reed B and Roller L (1996), these outcomes are significantly lower than expected and do not correlate with the site statistics outlined above.

Additional research is, therefore, required to investigate:

- factors accounting for the relatively low conversion rate of community pharmacists and allied health professionals who view the program to those who are motivated to complete the program evaluation and/or CPE assessment
- the extent to which the oral health information hosted on the PharmaCE website has impacted on community pharmacists' level of knowledge
- the extent to which community pharmacists apply this knowledge

Expected sustainable outcomes

To ensure that the project continues to attract the number of visitors to the site, it is paramount that the information and online interactions remain vibrant, current and relevant as well as providing the flexibility that allows community pharmacists and health professionals meet their CPE requirements.

The cost associated with fulfilling these functions will be met through sponsorship and the fee-for-service to access the CPE assessment component.

Conclusion

The preliminary findings of the project indicate that use of web-based facilities is an effective way to deliver information and education to community pharmacists and allied health professionals, in particular those who service remote and isolated communities.

The project has indeed raised the level of awareness among community pharmacists of oral health and ways to improve oral health outcomes for older people. However, additional research is necessary to establish the extent to which community pharmacists apply the information accessed via the web, in particular the information hosted on the PharmaCE website.

Attachment 1

Improving Oral Health for Older People Online Evaluation

To ensure that this site remains current, relevant and interactive, we would greatly appreciate you taking time to complete the evaluation. would greatly appreciate you taking time to complete the evaluation.

Instructions: Please click in the box provided to the option that best indicates your response.

1. Which of the following categories describes your current role?

Community pharmacist	Dentist
Nurse	Older Person
Medical Practitioner	Carer of older persons
Other (please specify):	

2. How did you find out about this site?

Monash University	Australian Nursing Homes and Extended Care Association
Pharmaceutical Society of Australia	Attending the program launch
Dental Health Services Victoria	Friends/Colleagues
Dept of Human Services	Surfing the Web
Division of General Practice	Other (please specify):

3a. What was your main reason for visiting this site?

Access information:

personal interest	as a carer
counsel patient/client	gain CPE points
Other (please specify):	

3b. To what extent was your main aim for entering the site met?

All or almost all of the time	More than half of the time	Roughly half of the time	Less than half of the time	Very little or not at all
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4. I found the site:

i. easy to navigate

All or almost all of the time	More than half of the time	Roughly half of the time	Less than half of the time	Very little or not at all
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ii. interactive

All or almost all of the time	More than half of the time	Roughly half of the time	Less than half of the time	Very little or not at all
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iii. layout well presented

All or almost all of the time	More than half of the time	Roughly half of the time	Less than half of the time	Very little or not at all
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iv. quick to download images

All or almost all of the time	More than half of the time	Roughly half of the time	Less than half of the time	Very little or not at all
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v. presented quality information

All or almost all of the time	More than half of the time	Roughly half of the time	Less than half of the time	Very little or not at all
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vi. made good use of links

All or almost all of the time	More than half of the time	Roughly half of the time	Less than half of the time	Very little or not at all
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Comment:

5. Has the information on this site improved your knowledge of oral health issues for older people?

Yes

No

Undecided

6. To what extent would you recommend this site to others?

All or almost all of the time More than half of the time Roughly half of the time Less than half of the time Very little or not at all

Comment:

7. List three (3) other health related areas you would like included on the PharmaCE website.

- i.
- ii.
- iii.

8. Which of the following functions/features would you like to see included on the PharmaCE website?

- links to professional associations
- upcoming events
- email notification of new programs
- other (please specify)

9. Additional comments:

Thank you for your participation

Oral Health Promotions Grant Executive Summary 2002

Background

Recent government strategies to deliver a more integrated and responsive health service to the community has been a catalyst for changing the role of pharmacists. Today, pharmacists are increasingly becoming the 'first port of call' to provide advice to their clients and broader community on a range of health matters, including oral health and hygiene.

The Continuing Pharmacy Education (CPE) program is recognised as an effective mechanism to deliver information and education on current and emerging areas of health to community pharmacists. This program is coordinated by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) and is well attended.

However, there are a range of barriers that particularly impact on community pharmacists that service remote and isolated communities from accessing CPE. This project was designed to overcome many of these barriers by using the internet to provide community pharmacists greater access to information and education on oral health.

Project aim

The Victorian College of Pharmacy (Monash University) in collaboration with the PSA, Dental Health Services Victoria and the Aged Care Association has developed an online program designed to increase awareness among community pharmacists on their role in assisting older people and their carers to achieve better oral health.

The *'Improving Oral Health for Older People'* online program is hosted on the PharmaCE website found at <http://www.pharmace.vic.edu.au>

The PharmaCE website is designed to allow pharmacists and allied health professionals access to information and greater educational opportunities on a range of health topics, including oral health.

Program features

Program content:

- is prepared by a medical writer
- is independently reviewed by a peer and an editorial committee
- incorporates interaction to engage the user, facilitate the exchange of ideas and information and enhance learning outcomes
- will be reviewed on a regular basis to maintain currency and accuracy

Consistent with other programs hosted on the PharmaCE website, the *'Improving Oral Health for Older People'* online program delivers:

- information, which is freely available to all registered users (registration is free)
- CPE pathway, which is available on a fee-for-service basis
- flexible pathway towards a postgraduate qualification

KPI's

Since the launch of the *'Improving Oral Health for Older People'* online program in October 2001 over:

- 60,000 screens have been viewed
- 5,300 visitors have accessed the site
- 720 visitors have been referred from other websites
- 250 health professionals have registered at the PharmaCE website