Risk Assessment of Prescribing Errors on Medical Prescriptions in Malta and Germany

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INTRODUCTION
The medication use process consists of four main stages, namely, the diagnosis, prescribing, dispensing and patient adherence. Medication errors can occur at any of these stages.1 Errors on a medical practitioner’s prescription may lead to erroneous dispensing by the pharmacist. A risk assessment of errors on medical prescriptions in Malta and Germany was undertaken.

AIMS
The study developed a comparative research method with the aim of
1) identifying and analysing the current status of processes that may lead to prescribing errors and,
2) assessing the risk of prescribing errors from a medical practitioner perspective.

METHOD
- Interviews with medical practitioners were conducted in Malta and in Germany to identify root causes of prescribing errors.
- Interview results were used to develop a questionnaire (validated by 16 experts) for medical practitioners, entitled ‘Prescribing Error Questionnaire’ (PEQmed).
- The PEQmed consisted of a Demographic section and two other sections;

RESULTS
- Two hundred and four medical practitioners (104 Malta, 100 Germany) answered the PEQmed.
- Two main categories related to root causes in the medication use process; i) work environment factors, for example, interruptions while treating patients and ii) prescriber-related factors, for example, patient information emerged from the data analysis of the literature and medical practitioners’ interviews.
- Interruption rates while consulting a patient as a root cause of prescribing errors showed a statistically significant difference among medical practitioners (p<0.001) with 63 medical practitioners in Malta compared to 32 in Germany.

CONCLUSION
The potential risk of prescribing errors in Malta and Germany was assessed by undertaking a risk assessment exercise. Healthcare risk assessment methods are relatively new and have been used in high-risk industries. Considering the medication use process as highly-risk prone, it would be appropriate to consider, apply and implement risk assessment methods in this context to mitigate risks related to prescribing errors.

REFERENCES