

Identifying patient-centred training needs for pharmaceutical good distribution practice

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Introduction: Patient-centeredness in healthcare delivery recognises that a patient's values and preferences must be central in the delivery of pharmaceutical services. Within the Ministry of Health, the Pharmacy of Your Choice (POYC) unit is responsible for providing access to medicines within the national health service scheme through private community pharmacies. The service includes distribution of medicines, which are centrally procured, to the community pharmacies in Malta and Gozo. The study aimed to address the training needs for pharmaceutical good distribution practice of POYC health workforce instilling an enhanced patient-centred approach.

Method: A questionnaire aimed at assessing the core competencies of the services of the POYC workforce was compiled and validated by four pharmacists each coming from academia, hospital, community, and regulatory sectors respectively. The validated questionnaire was disseminated electronically to POYC workforce. The questionnaire consisted of open and closed-ended questionnaires with a Likert scale (1 to 5, 5 being strongly agree).

Results: All members of the validation panel (n = 4) agreed that the questionnaire was feasible, practical to complete, taking not more than ten minutes to complete. The questions were concise and clear. Study findings from the distribution of the questionnaire: 27 POYC workforce indicate that the highest training need focuses on Good Distribution Practices (Mean = 4.3). The second priority is Organization and Personnel (Mean = 4.1) followed by Philosophy of Patient-Centred Care (Mean = 4.1) where the participants will capacitate themselves in building more responsive patient care.

Conclusions: An online self-paced training course focusing on the themes highlighted by the POYC workforce is designed based on an interactive participant approach.

Implementation of a framework for the MMA Academy for patient-centred excellence and innovation in regulatory sciences

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Introduction: The Academy for Patient Centred Excellence and Innovation in Regulatory Sciences, launched under the auspices of the Malta Medicines Authority (MMA), was set up to merge research, training and education into the regulatory environment, strengthening the commitment of the MMA towards sustainable development and innovation. The aim was to implement a framework for the academic platform that encompasses the elements of accreditation, collaboration and optimisation.

Method: In 2020, the Educational Planning and Academic Development (EPAD) Unit within the MMA prioritised the process for accreditation of the MMA Academy as an Educational Institution through the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA). Application forms for provider and programme accreditation, accessible through the MFHEA website and supporting documentation, including a robust Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) policy were compiled and submitted to the MFHEA for evaluation. Sustained liaison with national and international partners was undertaken during the process.

Results: Over a total of 250 email exchanges, minuted meetings and trainings were recorded between MMA Academy staff, the MFHEA and Pharma Consulting Walther throughout the accreditation process. The Award in Good Manufacturing Practice Programme was accredited at Level 5 on the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) in January 2021 following two evaluation cycles by the MFHEA. The MMA Academy was licensed as a Higher Education Institution in April 2021 subsequent to the positive accreditation of the first educational programme and an intensive review of the IQA policy by the Quality Assurance Unit within the MFHEA.

Conclusions: The licensing of the MMA Academy as an Educational Institution marks another milestone in the strides made by the professional workforce of the MMA, in collaboration with pertinent national and international bodies, to expand on advanced scientific initiatives that cascade through educational planning and academic development of accredited programmes that meet stakeholder needs and expectations.