

PHARMACIST PERSPECTIVE OF PRESCRIBING ERRORS

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INTRODUCTION

Errors on a medical prescription may lead to erroneous dispensing by the pharmacist. An assessment of root causes that might lead to dispensing errors in Malta and Germany was undertaken.

AIMS

To assess root causes that have the potential to lead to reduced detection of prescribing errors in medical prescriptions from a pharmacist perspective.

METHOD

- A questionnaire to assess root causes in medical prescription errors was developed, validated and electronically disseminated to 338 pharmacists in Malta and 188 pharmacists in Germany.
- The validation process was undertaken by a panel of experts (N=14), comprising of 7 physicians and 7 pharmacists.
- The questionnaire analysed the current status of root causes by asking community pharmacists to rate the causes for reduced detection of prescribing errors.

RESULTS

- One hundred eighty-nine pharmacists (86 Malta, 103 Germany) answered the questionnaire.
- Pharmacists in Malta (n=40, 47%) claimed to get interrupted more often while consulting a patient than pharmacists in Germany (n=33, 32%) ($p < 0.05$) (Figure 1).
- Work environment factors, such as stress as a root cause for errors, was significantly higher as claimed by pharmacists in Malta (n=63, 73%) compared to pharmacists in Germany (n=63, 61%) ($p < 0.05$).
- Dispenser-related factors, such as the information on a patient (for example address, age) showed a statistically significant difference. Community pharmacists in Germany (n=77, 75%) indicated that they were well or very well informed of their patients' details compared to pharmacists in Malta, where less pharmacists (n=30, 36%) stated that they have this patient information ($p < 0.05$).

- The information on the medical history of patients showed a statistical significant difference ($p < 0.05$) among both countries. No community pharmacist in Malta (n=0) mentioned that they were well-informed about the medical history of the patients, compared to pharmacists in Germany (n=31).

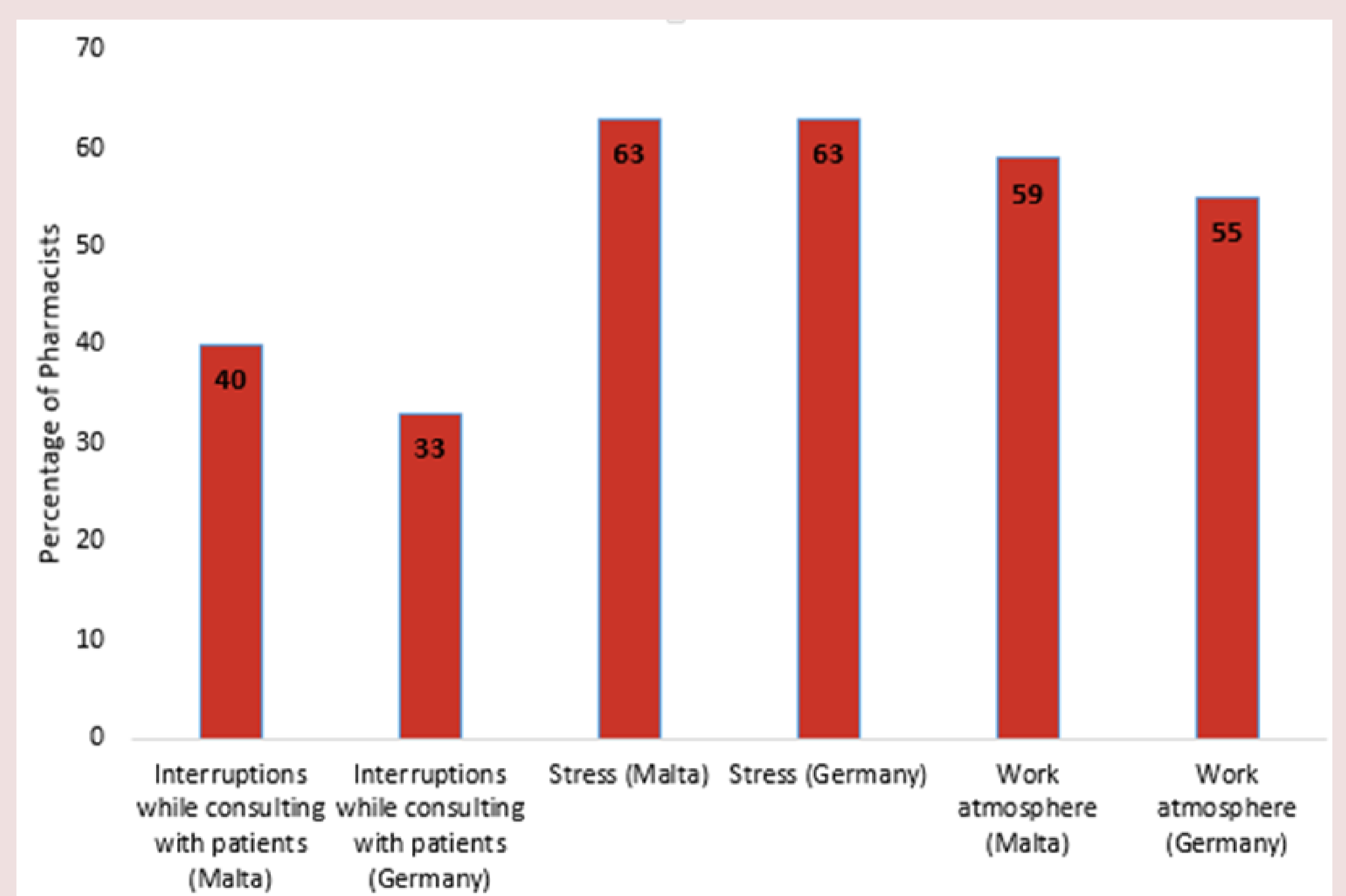


Figure 1: Root Causes Ranking of Interruptions, Stress and Work Atmosphere

CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that work environment and dispenser-related factors are an issue with respect to detecting errors on medical prescriptions. The awareness of community pharmacists can be increased to avoid future errors. Different work settings and technical equipment may have a positive impact in reducing the risk of errors and may be a reason for the differences between Malta and Germany.