

Dianne Butler, Lilian M. Azzopardi, Anthony Serracino-Inglott

Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Malta, Msida, Malta
email: dianne.butler.03@um.edu.mt

INTRODUCTION

Human and animal health, including their medical treatment, are closely related. Animal patients are diverse and may include companion animals, food-producing animals, captive animals and wildlife. Each group of animal patients have their unique health conditions but also share some health conditions with the human population. Pets, or animal companions, develop chronic conditions such as thyroid disorders, diabetes, osteoarthritis and cardiovascular diseases that are frequently seen in humans.¹

Pharmacists are uniquely positioned to counsel pet owners and collaborate with veterinary surgeons to improve animal care and access to safe and effective medicines.²

METHOD

A questionnaire for pet owners, entitled "The pet owner's perception of the role of the pharmacist, challenges and barriers regarding access to medicinal products and animal care" (POP-Q) was developed, validated and disseminated.

The questionnaire was designed to obtain information about the nature of the medication given to pets and the challenges they face when administering the medication. The pet owners' perception of the role of the community pharmacist was also identified.

Design of POP-Q

- **Section A:** Demographic data
- **Section B:** Challenges of access to medicine
- **Section C:** Perception of the role of the pharmacist and pharmacy services

Validation

- Content Validity Index
- Panel of 6 Experts

Dissemination

- Through social media platform
- Reaching population of 80,500 members

AIMS

To identify pet owner's perception of the role of the pharmacist in animal care.

SETTING

Pet owners reached through social media platforms including social groups.
The expert panel included veterinary surgeons, pharmacists and lay persons.

RESULTS

- 232 pet owners answered the questionnaire.
- 51% (n=118) pet owners stated that they have been prescribed a medicine that needed to be purchased from a community pharmacy. Fifty percent (n=116) of pet owners disagreed or strongly disagreed that pharmacists have the knowledge to give advice regarding the administration, mode of action and side effects for medication use in animals. Fifty-three percent (n=122) disagreed that pharmacists can give advice on chronic medical conditions that affect their pets.
- 91% (n=208) prefer to ask the veterinarian for advice rather than the pharmacist. 75% (n=172) would be more willing to go to a pharmacist for advice if they can be sure pharmacists are knowledgeable and skilled with respect to animal care (Figure 1).
- Pet owners were asked to indicate what services they would like community pharmacies to offer (Figure 2). 83% (n=193) would like community pharmacies to stock veterinary medicines. Other services suggested by pet owners included urine testing (n=114), compounding medicinal products (n=94) and glucose checks (n=87) for their pets.

Figure 1: Pet owner's willingness to go to a community pharmacist for advice regarding their pet if they can be sure pharmacists have the knowledge and skills (N=232)

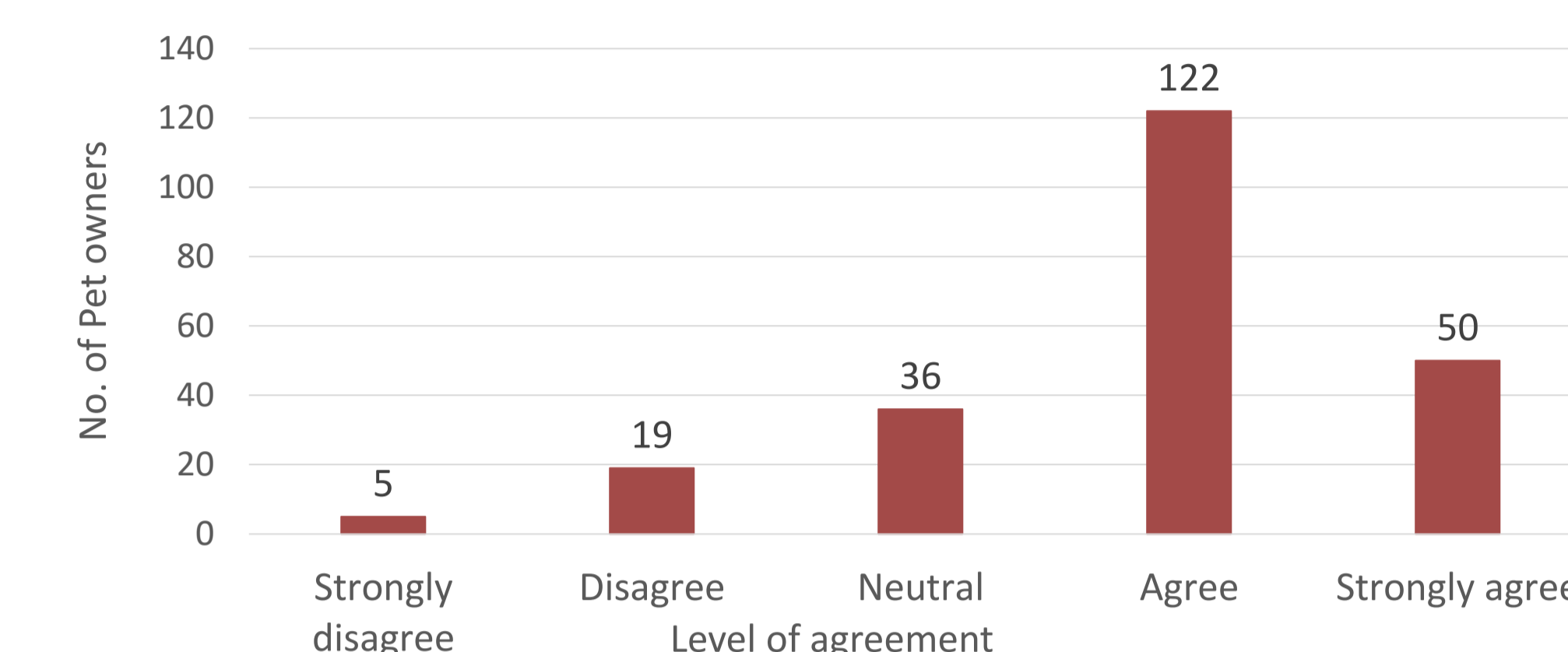
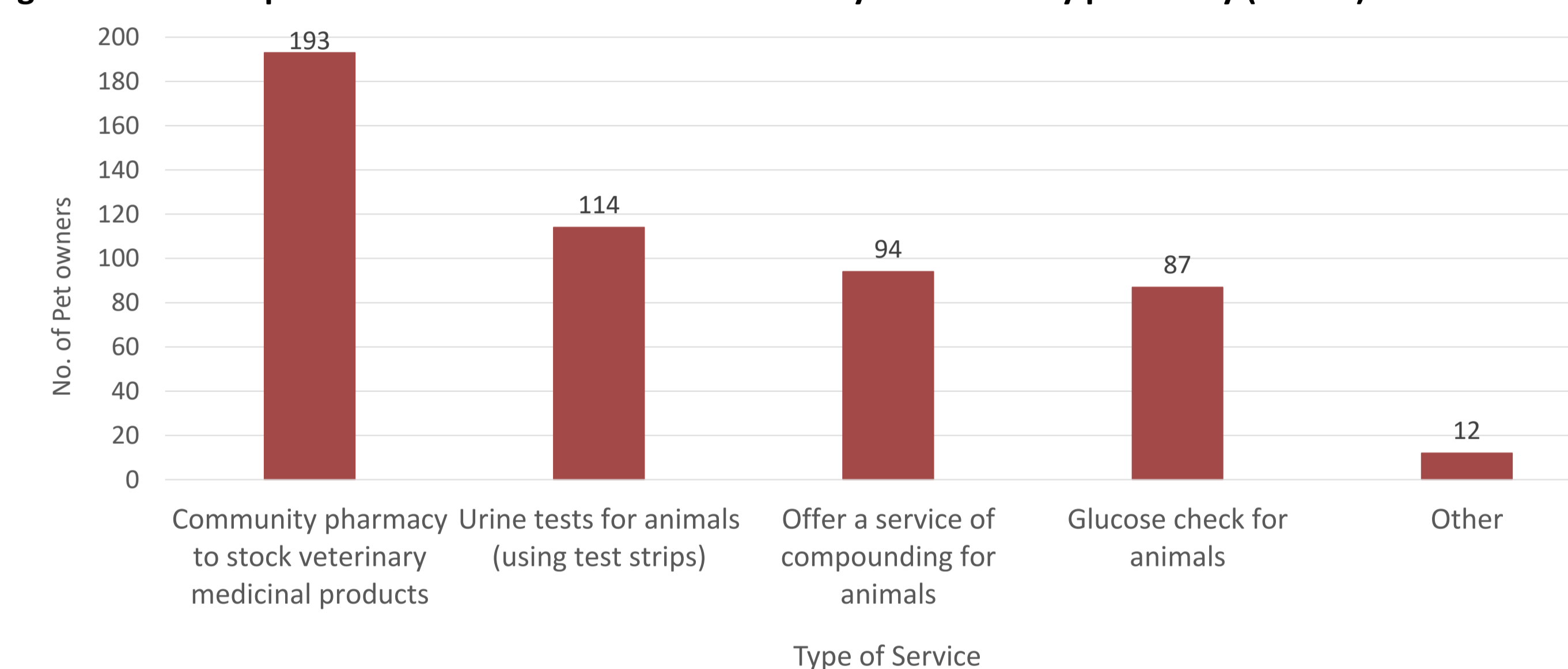


Figure 2: Services pet owners would like to see offered by a community pharmacy (N=232)



CONCLUSION

The trust in the pharmacist taking an active role in animal care could be improved in the fifty-three percent of pet-owners who had reservations. Results from this study indicate that pet owners with a higher level of education were more willing to ask a community pharmacist for advice if they can be assured of the pharmacist's competence.

Considering that 83% of pet owners would like pharmacies to stock veterinary products indicates a proposal for improvement in access to veterinary medicinal products. Stocking veterinary medicinal products may help strengthen the role of the pharmacist with pet owners. Stocking and selling veterinary medicinal products sends the message that from a community pharmacy one can both purchase the medicine and obtain advice.³

REFERENCES

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