

# RISKS OF PHARMACIST PRESCRIBING: GENERAL PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Sophia Hatzel<sup>1</sup>, Maresca Attard Pizzuto<sup>2</sup>, Lilian M. Azzopardi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Pharmacy, University of Bonn, An der Immenburg 4, 53121 Bonn, Germany

<sup>2</sup> Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

email: maresca.attard-pizzuto@um.edu.mt

## INTRODUCTION

Pharmacists are valued and accessible healthcare professionals positively contributing to patient care.<sup>1</sup> In Malta, legal frameworks updating is required to allow for pharmacist prescribing. Being easily accessible in community pharmacies, requests by patients for prescription medicines are handled by pharmacists who assess patients and refer to physicians when prescription medications or further assessment is required.

## AIMS

- i) To assess public’s perception of pharmacists and
- ii) To evaluate public’s perception regarding the risks of potential antibiotic prescribing by pharmacists

## METHOD

A pre-validated questionnaire was used.<sup>2</sup> The questionnaire, available in both Maltese and English, was disseminated to the general public (>18 years) in public areas (shopping malls and popular shopping streets). Recruitment was done over a four-week period. The questionnaire is divided into two sections and consists of 21 questions.

*Section 1:* Demographic data which includes gender, age, level of education and area of residence

*Section 2:* Public Perception of Antibiotics Prescribing by Pharmacists.

Statistical analysis was undertaken using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences® (SPSS®) version 25.

Questions in section 2 are focused on the general public’s trust in the pharmacist and medical practitioner, the possible risks of antibiotic prescribing by pharmacists and the behavior and knowledge of patients towards antibiotics. This section consists of 17 questions: 3 Likert scale, 5 multiple choice and 9 binary questions. The five point Likert scale ranges from 0 to 4, 0 being the lowest score and 4 being the highest.

## RESULTS

A total of 400 participants completed the questionnaire (51% female, 33% over 60 years). Forty-four percent of participants stated they always visit the same pharmacist. Older participants (60 and older) tend to visit the same pharmacist more often than the younger age group (p<0.001). Seventeen percent admitted to have asked their pharmacist for antibiotics without a doctor’s prescription and 51% expect to be prescribed antibiotics upon visiting a doctor when they feel they have symptoms of an infection. Forty-two percent of participants think there is a risk to patients if pharmacists were to prescribe a selected number of antibiotics. Figure 1 shows the mean rating scores of possible risks of pharmacist prescribing as perceived by the general public.

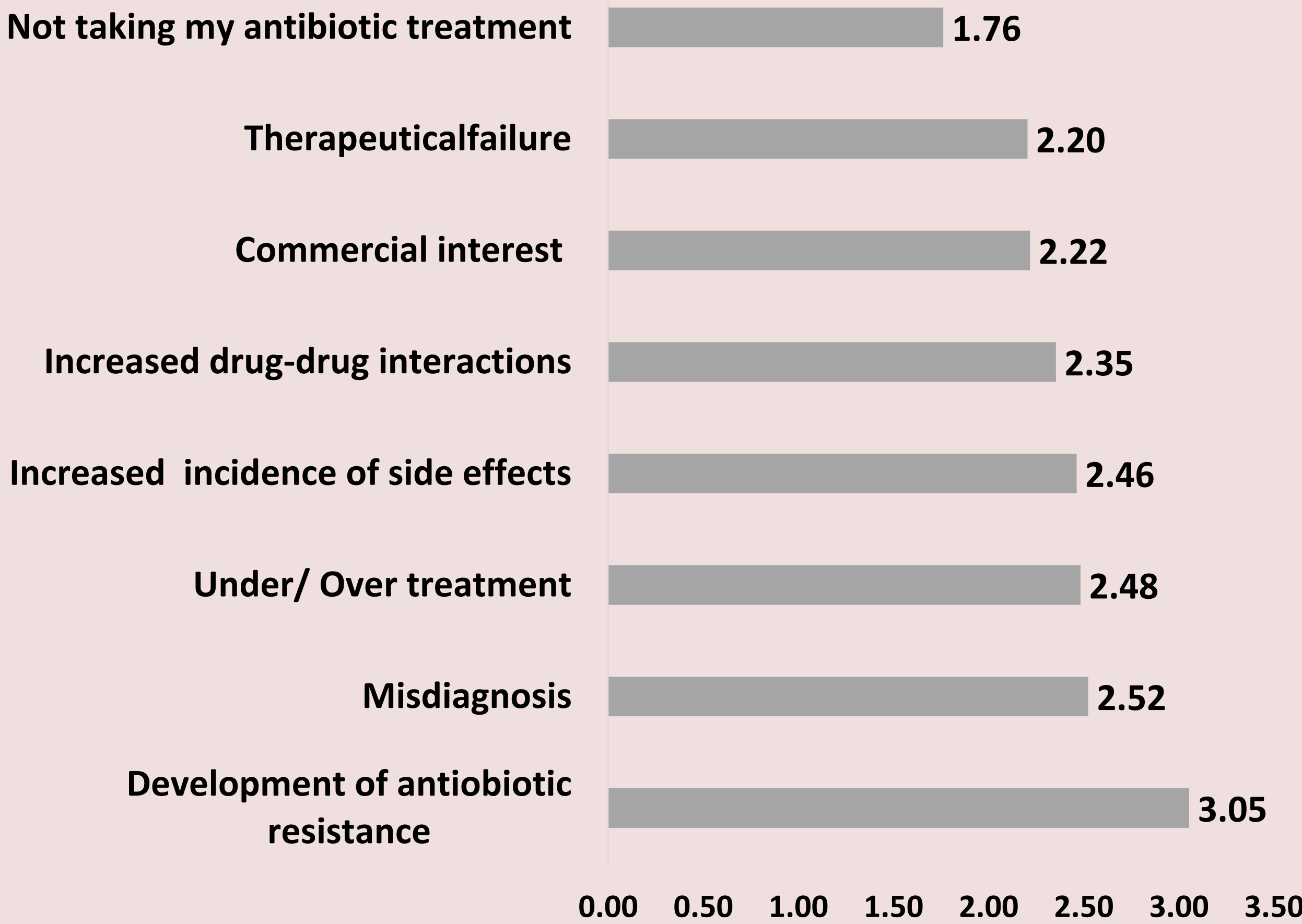


Figure 1: Mean rating scores of possible risks of pharmacists prescribing

## CONCLUSION

There is the need to educate the public that antibiotics may not necessarily be required in all infections and that prescribers should be left to prescribe what they believe is right for the patient, without coercion from patients. There is a perception of risk with the prescribing of antibiotics by pharmacists which could be alleviated by additional training given to pharmacists to prepare them with sufficient knowledge for their potential prescribing role.

## REFERENCES

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- 2 Attard Pizzuto M, Sivridas M, Serracino-Inglott A, Azzopardi LM, Bouvy ML. Public Perception of Antibiotic Prescribing by Pharmacists. Poster presented at FIP, Seoul, South Korea, 2017