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ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT AND AWARENESS IN GEORGIAN PHARMACIES

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Doi: <https://doi.org/10.52340/jecm.2025.01.14>*ეკა ფრუიძე, ნანა დუღაშვილი, ნინო სახელაშვილი***პაციენტების ინფორმირებულობის შეფასება და რეკლამაციების მართვა საქართველოს სააფთიაქო ქსელებში**

თბილისის სახელმწიფო სამედიცინო უნივერსიტეტი, საქართველო

რეზიუმე

განვითარებულ ქვეყნებში ფარმაცევტული სერვისების გაუმჯობესების და რისკების თავიდან აცილების მიზნით, აქტუალურია კარგი სააფთიაქო პრაქტიკის პრინციპების მიხედვით პაციენტის საჩივრების/რეკლამაციების მართვის სისტემის დანერგვა აფთიაქში. კვლევის მიზანი იყო შეგვესწავლა იმართება თუ არა საქართველოს აფთიაქებში მომსახურებით უკმაყოფილო პაციენტების პრეტენზიები/რეკლამაციები, ასევე, შეგვეფასებინა პაციენტების ინფორმირებულობის ხარისხი, პრეტენზიის გამოხატვის უფლების შესახებ. კვლევის მეთოდად გამოვიყენეთ ელექტრონული კითხვარი, რომელიც ანონიმურობის დაცვით შეავსო 450 პირმა.

კვლევის შედეგებით, ფარმაცევტული მომსახურებით უკმაყოფილო პაციენტების უმრავლესობას შესაძლებლობა ჰქონდა აფთიაქში პრეტენზია გამოეხატა რეკლამაციის ფურცლის მეშვეობით, შედეგად ვასკვნიტ, რომ სააფთიაქო ქსელებში მეტ-ნაკლები ეფექტურობით დანერგილია რეკლამაციის მართვის სისტემა. პაციენტების მიერ შემოსული საჩივრების უმეტესობა ეხებოდა: აფთიაქში პროდუქციის დეფიციტს, არასწორ ეტიკეტირებას, ფარმაცევტის არაკომპეტენტურობას, ექიმის დანიშნულების შეცვლას პაციენტის ინფორმირების გარეშე. კვლევაში ჩართული იმ უკმაყოფილო პაციენტებიდან, რომლებმაც აფთიაქში რეკლამაციის ფურცელი შეავსეს, უმრავლესობამ მიიღო უკუკავშირი აფთიაქის მენეჯმენტისგან და საბოლოოდ კმაყოფილი დარჩა რეაგირებით, რაც მიგვანიშნებს, რომ რეკლამაციის სისტემა ამცირებს უკმაყოფილო პაციენტების რიცხვს და ზრდის მათ ლოიალობას. კვლევაში ჩართული პირების მეოთხედმა არ იცოდა, რომ აქვს პრეტენზიის დაფიქსირების უფლება აფთიაქში, ამიტომ რეკომენდებულია ჩატარდეს მნიშვნელოვანი სამუშაოები პაციენტების ინფორმირებულობის ხარისხის ასამაღლებლად.

Introduction. The quality of community pharmacy services significantly impacts the health of both pharmacy users and patients, influencing their clinical outcomes, quality of life, and disease prevention [1,2,3]. However, the unmanaged process of pharmaceutical care within pharmacies, coupled with low pharmacist competence and a lack of adherence to good pharmacy practice (GPP), raises the likelihood of errors, thereby adversely affecting public health [4,5].

To bolster pharmaceutical services in Western nations, various forms of patient feedback have been employed over time, including face-to-face communication and, more recently, online platforms introduced over the last two decades. Among these feedback mechanisms, the effective management of patient complaints stands out. Such management not only enhances the quality system of pharmaceutical services and mitigates errors in drug dispensing but also boosts satisfaction and loyalty among pharmacy users and patients [6,7].

Unfortunately, we are still missing the proper monitoring systems of unsatisfied community pharmacy customers in Georgia, which supposed to be managed by the Governmental institutions. The purpose of this research was to investigate the management of complaints received by users/patients within the pharmaceutical service provided by Georgian pharmacy chains. Additionally, the study aimed to assess the level of awareness among pharmacy users regarding their rights in cases of receiving poor-

quality products or pharmaceutical services at pharmacies. Furthermore, it sought to understand user behavior and identify peculiarities and trends in this area within the context of Georgia [8,9].

Methodology

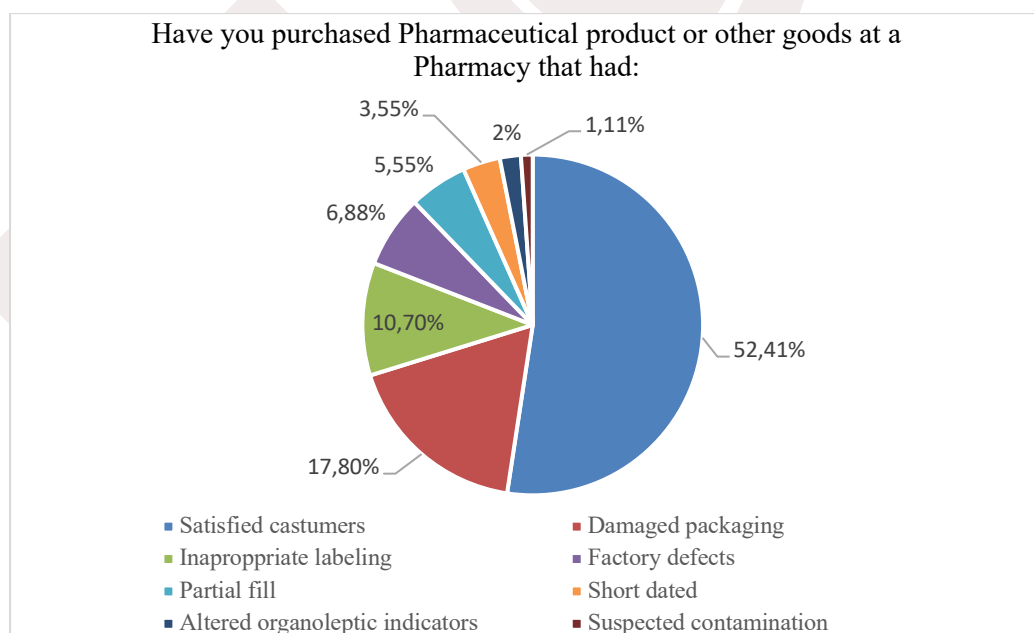
Participants. A total of 450 Georgian pharmacy users voluntarily participated in the study. The majority of the respondents were women, comprising 92.7% of the total. Their ages predominantly fell within the range of 25-34 years, with 33% of respondents aged between 35-44 years. The remaining participants were 45 years old and older.

Procedure. The survey designed in Qualtrics program. The research survey was shared on social media within a closed group named "Pharmacy Users." The study was described as a survey aimed at pharmacy users to gauge their satisfaction regarding their ability to file complaints, as well as the subsequent outcomes.

Measures. The research survey encompassed the demographics of the participants and questions regarding complaint management, such as: "Have you ever had a complaint regarding the quality of the product in the past year?", "Have you been offered to file a complaint in case of dissatisfaction with the service or product?", "Have you filled out the complaint form?", "Have you been contacted by the pharmacy representative after filling out the complaint?" and what specific complaints they had regarding the pharmaceutical products for which they filed complaints.

Results. Before delving into the attitudes and behaviors surrounding the filing of complaints, the survey explored general satisfaction regarding pharmaceutical services and products purchased in pharmacies.

Table N1. shows reasons for the dissatisfied customers in regard to the purchased products



As for satisfaction with pharmaceutical services, the questionnaire revealed that 38% of the study participants were satisfied with pharmaceutical services in the past year. 23.8% cited a shortage of medicine in the pharmacy, 12.2% identified pharmacist incompetence, and 10% experienced changes in prescribed medication without consent, resulting in receiving a pharmaceutical product with a different name. Additionally, 3.8% reported receiving wrongly dispensed medication, while 2.7% received the wrong form of medication. About 4% received incorrect drug doses, 1.3% experienced incorrect billing, and 4.2% noted violations of ethical norms by the pharmacist. As for the quality of pharmacy products,

around half of the respondents expressed satisfaction. The rest of the customers were dissatisfied, with 17.8% reporting purchasing damaged packaging, 10.7% acquiring a product with inappropriate labeling or a label in a non-native language, and 6.88% encountering factory defects. Additionally, 5.55% experienced partial fill, 3.55% received products that were short-dated, 2% received medicinal products with altered organoleptic indicators, and 1.11% suspected contamination in the purchased products.

According to the results, out of 279 dissatisfied customers, only 48 (17%) filled out the complaint form at the pharmacy. Of the remaining customers who reported dissatisfaction but did not fill out the survey, 33% reported that pharmacists never offered to fill out a complaint form, and 27.3% of customers admitted to refraining from filling out complaint forms to avoid creating problems for the pharmacy or pharmacist. 26.4% reported that they did not have information that they had the right to fill out the complaint survey. 9% of dissatisfied customers cited a lack of time as a reason for not filling out the form, while 4.3% believed that writing a complaint would lead to no change anyway.

Subsequently, it was investigated whether those who filled out the survey received any feedback and their satisfaction level afterward. Findings revealed that every customer (48 respondents) who filled out a complaint received feedback. We investigated their satisfaction level after receiving the feedback. The findings revealed that the vast majority (93%) were satisfied with the feedback received, with 5% being very satisfied and 2% remaining unsatisfied.

Conclusions and Recommendations. After analyzing the study data, the following conclusions and recommendations can be made:

- Despite the absence of monitoring system of the legal regulation regarding customer complaints in Georgia, pharmacies generally handle received complaints to some extent.
- Approximately one-fourth of surveyed customers are unaware of their right to file complaints, while another one-fourth choose not to file a complaint to avoid creating problems for a pharmacist. This indicates patient unawareness regarding the procedures that follow the filing; patients don't realize that filing a complaint improves pharmacy services rather than inconveniencing pharmacists.
- Among the patients dissatisfied with pharmaceutical services who filed complaints (17%) and received feedback from the pharmacy, the majority expressed satisfaction with the outcome. This suggests the effectiveness of the complaint system in transforming complaining patients into satisfied customers.
- It is noteworthy that most complaints stem from pharmaceutical product shortages, pharmacist incompetence, and the substitution of one product for another without customer consent, which constitutes a violation of their rights. It is recommended that legislation be enacted in Georgia to regulate customer complaints regarding pharmaceutical services, ensuring their proper handling and resolution. Additionally, pharmacy management should prioritize addressing these issues and implementing regulations for the complaint-filing process. This approach will enable a more comprehensive examination of customer dissatisfaction, protect customer rights, and enhance service quality.
- Patient awareness in Georgia regarding their right to file complaints about pharmaceutical services needs to be enhanced, emphasizing the importance of providing clear and accessible information.

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SUMMARY

Aim. This study examined complaint management in Georgian pharmacies and assessed patient awareness of their rights regarding poor-quality products or services.

Method. 450 participants - Georgian pharmacy users voluntarily participated in the study. The research survey was shared on social media within a closed group named "Pharmacy Users."

Key findings and Conclusions. The results revealed that pharmacies addressed complaints to some extent despite lacking legal regulation. However, a significant portion of patients were unaware of their right to file complaints, leading to underreporting. Satisfaction levels among dissatisfied customers who received feedback suggested the effectiveness of the complaint system. Common complaints included product shortages, labeling issues, and dispensing errors, indicating the need for improved control. The study discusses recommendations based on the results.

Keywords: Community pharmacy, complaint management, patient rights, care, service

