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**Stueck Pharmacy**

**Leader, SK**

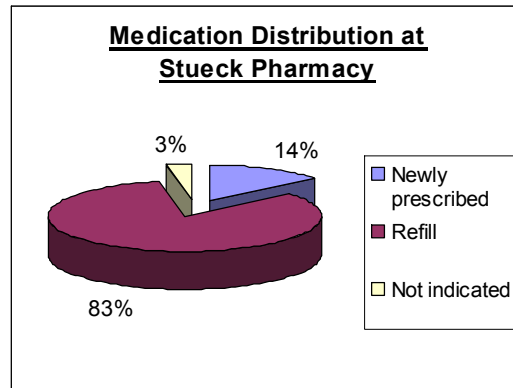


My project began at the beginning of July 2009. After much brainstorming, Gordon and I decided that my project would consist of a three-part confidential survey to be distributed randomly to the patients of Stueck Pharmacy. Part A of the survey consisted of questions directed towards customer satisfaction regarding pharmaceutical services in our store; Part B touched on the Ontario Medscheck program and was included to see whether or not patients were aware of the program and if there was interest in a similar program for Saskatchewan residents; Part C was dedicated to the issue of pharmacists prescribing and was designed to capture patient views and opinions on this controversial topic.

The final document consisted of 18 questions and was estimated to take 10 minutes to complete. The surveys were randomly distributed based on prescription number; prescriptions ending in a 3, 6, or 9 were dispensed with a survey. Distribution of surveys began on July 10<sup>th</sup> with the deadline originally set for July 24<sup>th</sup>. As the deadline approached the decision was made to extend it one more week so more surveys could be distributed and to allow patients extra time for completion. The deadline was extended to August 4<sup>th</sup> and the 200<sup>th</sup> survey was distributed on July 28<sup>th</sup>. This meant that every patient had at least one week to complete and return the survey to the pharmacy.

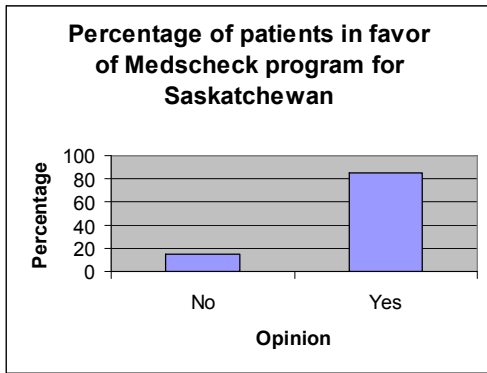
Only 65 of the 200 surveys distributed were returned to Stueck's

Pharmacy. This 33% return rate was much less than the 70% I had been hoping for but was still appreciated. Of the 65 returned, only 64 were included in the final data evaluation.



Over the three week period of study, 83% of the surveyed patients had medication refills, while 14% had newly prescribed medication. Each group in Part A was evaluated separately during data compilation. When asked how available the pharmacist was to answer medication questions 89% of patients chose "very available." Only 2% of patients in the refill category deemed pharmacist availability less than adequate. Overall, the patients of Stueck's Pharmacy seem to be quite happy with the pharmacy services provided. The only question which brought forth some concern was the one regarding side effects. Only 56% of new medication users and 50% of the refill group chose "yes" when asked if they understood the possible side effects of their medication after speaking to the pharmacist. Needless to say, this is not a complete surprise. As pharmacists it is often a struggle when counseling a patient to know how much information about a drug is enough versus too much. We do

not want to frighten patients into noncompliance with an overload of adverse effects but at the same time education regarding common side effects must still be provided. Even though the likelihood of an adverse reaction is often rare, patients still want to know about these medication details. Perhaps our patients would like more information on possible side effects and that is why they selected “no” on this particular question.



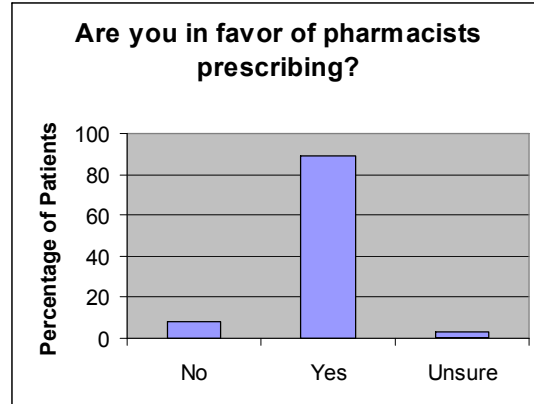
Ontario implemented the Medscheck Program in December of 2006. It is a 30 minute annual patient-pharmacist consultation designed for patients with a chronic illness that are taking 3 or more medications. A pharmacist obtains the patient’s medication chart and reviews it, making sure that the appropriate drug, dose, and dosage regimen are being used. The pharmacist checks for any drug interactions with both prescription and over-the-counter medications and answers any patient queries<sup>1</sup>. In Part B of the survey patients were asked if they knew about Medscheck and if they would be interested in a similar program for Saskatchewan residents. Only 14% of the patients surveyed had ever heard about the

program, but 80% of patients said they would be interested in a Medscheck program if it were available in Saskatchewan. The third question in Part B touched on the cost of the program. In Ontario the service is free for residents with valid health insurance and the government provides a reimbursement fee of \$50 to the pharmacy for each consultation.<sup>1</sup> In order to gauge the value of this program, participants were asked what percentage of the total cost they would be willing to pay, assuming the government would cover the remainder. The results showed that 50% of participants were willing to pay one quarter of the cost, 17% were willing to pay half the cost, and 8% were willing to pay the whole cost of the service. A number of patients left this question blank and one patient suggested that the Saskatchewan government should pay all costs of the program. Medscheck is a valuable program for patients and provides job satisfaction for pharmacists as it truly is a provision of pharmaceutical care. Judging by the results of this survey, patients within the rural area would benefit from the service.



The past few years have brought many changes to the scope of pharmacy practice. Pharmacists in Alberta have prescriptive authority and legislation is currently underway in Saskatchewan; this evolution in the profession of pharmacy is in the province's near future so Part C of the survey contained questions pertaining to the topic of prescriptive authority for pharmacists.<sup>2</sup> Only 27% of participants were aware that Alberta pharmacists could prescribe medications and even less (14%) knew that Saskatchewan pharmacists would soon be able to do the same. Space was available in this section for participants to voice any thoughts and/or opinions on the controversial topic of prescribing rights. Though many patients do have an accurate idea of what this entails, there were a surprising number of misconceptions as to what "pharmacists prescribing" really means. (*A full index of patient responses is included in the Appendix section of this paper.*) Overall, Stueck Pharmacy patients do seem to approve of pharmacists having prescriptive authority. The survey found that 84% of participants are in favor while 8% are not. Only 5 patients left this section blank and 2 of these participants wrote that they were "unsure" about the current legislation in Saskatchewan.

The results obtained from this small-scale survey have provided some insight into our patients that perhaps can be extrapolated to other rural areas in Saskatchewan. A Medscheck Program for Saskatchewan would be beneficial



for patients and as pharmacists we are certainly capable of providing this service. As for the issue of prescribing, most patients are in favor but seem to have limited education on the topic. As Saskatchewan gets closer to passing this legislation, it is important that patients remain up-to-date and informed; when pharmacists have the ability to prescribe it will surely impact patients, health care professionals, and the health care system as a whole.

#### References

1. Medscheck: A healthy dose of Information. Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care. Ontario 2007. Retrieved on 14AUG2009; available from <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/cs/medscheck>.
2. Pearson, G. Evolution in the practice of pharmacy – not a revolution! *CMAJ*. 176(9) 24APR2007. Retrieved 12AUG2009; available from <http://www.cmaj.ca>.
3. PQA Patient satisfaction survey workgroup. PQA Alliance NOV2006. Retrieved 3JUL2009; available from <http://www.pqaalliance.org/files/PatientSatisfactionSurveywithNov20notes.doc>.

## Appendix A – The Survey

Dear Patient,

You have been randomly selected to participate in a survey. This is a **CONFIDENTIAL** survey that will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please return this package to Stueck Pharmacy upon completion **NO LATER THAN TUESDAY, AUGUST 4<sup>th</sup>**; your participation is greatly appreciated. If you choose not to participate simply return the survey next time you are in the pharmacy. Please read the 18 questions carefully and answer openly and honestly.

### Part A:

1. Date of most recent prescription medication fill from Stueck Pharmacy:

Circle the correct description of this medication:

Newly prescribed

Refill

2. How available was the pharmacist to answer your medication questions?

3. Choose a number between 0 (unavailable) and 5 (very available).

0            1            2            3            4            5

4. Did a pharmacist discuss your medication with you?

YES            NO            N/A

5. Did the pharmacist explain things in a way that was clear and understandable?

YES            NO            N/A

6. After speaking to the pharmacist, did you understand how to use your medication correctly?

YES            NO            N/A

7. After speaking with the pharmacist, did you understand the possible side effects of your medication(s)?

YES NO N/A

8. Was the medication advice provided to you by your pharmacist useful/helpful?

YES NO N/A

9. Was the pharmacist professional in his/her interactions with you?

YES NO N/A

10. If you had any additional questions about your medications or about pharmacy services, were your questions answered by the pharmacy personnel to your satisfaction?

YES NO N/A

11. Were you comfortable asking the pharmacist questions?

YES NO N/A

If you chose **NO** for the above question, please explain how we could help make you feel more comfortable (example: one on one with pharmacist only, private counseling room, etc...)

**Part B:**

12. Have you heard about the Medscheck program that is available to Ontario residents? (*Medscheck is a 30 minute annual patient-pharmacist consultation for patients with a chronic illness that are taking 3 or more medications. A pharmacist obtains the patient's medication chart and reviews it, making sure that the appropriate drug, dose, and dosage regimen have been implemented. The pharmacist checks for any drug interactions and answers all questions. This service is free for Ontario residents with valid health insurance. The government provides a reimbursement fee of \$50 to the pharmacy for each consultation.*)

YES NO

13. Would you be in favor of a Medscheck program for Saskatchewan residents?

YES

NO

14. If Medscheck was implemented in Saskatchewan, how much would you be willing to pay for this service? (Assuming that the government would pay the remainder.)

Circle ONE of the following.

a) I would be willing to pay 100% of the total cost.

b) I would be willing to pay 50% of the total cost.

c) I would be willing to pay 25% of the total cost.

**Part C:**

15. Are you aware that Alberta pharmacists have the authority to prescribe certain medications under special circumstances?

YES

NO

16. Are you aware that Saskatchewan pharmacists will soon have prescribing abilities similar to Alberta pharmacists?

YES

NO

17. What does "pharmacist(s) prescribing" mean to you?

18. Are you in favor of pharmacists having prescriptive authority?

YES

NO

19. Please share your personal opinions about pharmacists prescribing medication in Saskatchewan. (Feel free to use the backside of the survey if more space is required.)

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!!

## Appendix B

### SURVEY RESULTS

#### PART A

##### 1. Type of Medication

New	Refill	Not Indicated
9 (14%)	54 (83%)	2 (3%)

##### 2. How available was the pharmacist to answer medication questions?

	1	2	3	4	5 (very available)
New	0	0	1 (11%)	0	8 (89%)
Refill	0	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	48 (90%)

##### 3. Did a pharmacist discuss your medication with you?

	Yes	No	N/A
New	27 (50%)	10 (19%)	17 (31%)
Refill	9 (100%)	0	0

##### 4. Did the pharmacist explain things a way that was clear and understandable?

	Yes	No	N/A
New	31 (57%)	2 (4%)	21 (39%)
Refill	9	0	0

##### 5. After speaking to the pharmacist, did you understand how to use your medication correctly?

	Yes	No	N/A
New	8 (89%)	0	1 (11%)
Refill	31 (57%)	1 (2%)	22 (41%)

##### 6. After speaking with the pharmacist did you understand the possible side effects of your medication?

	Yes	No	N/A
New	5 (56%)	2 (22%)	2 (22%)
Refill	27 (50%)	3 (6%)	24 (44%)

##### 7. Was the medication advice provided to you by your pharmacist useful/helpful?

	Yes	No	N/A
New	7 (78%)	0	2 (22%)
Refill	32 (59%)	1 (2%)	21 (39%)

**8. Was the pharmacist professional in his/her interactions with you?**

	Yes	No	N/A
New	9	0	0
Refill	48 (89%)	0	6 (11%)

**9. If you had any additional questions about your medications or about pharmacy services were your questions answered by the pharmacy personnel to your satisfaction?**

	Yes	No	N/A
New	5 (56%)	0	4 (44%)
Refill	38 (70%)	0	16 (30%)

**10. Were you comfortable asking the pharmacist questions?**

	Yes	No	N/A
New	9	0	0
Refill	44 (81%)	1 (2%)	9 (17%)

**PART B**

**11. Have you heard about the Medscheck program that is available to Ontario residents?**

Yes	No
9 (14%)	54 (84%)

\*1 left unanswered

**12. Would you be in favor of a Medscheck program for Saskatchewan residents?**

Yes	No
51 (80%)	9 (14%)

\*4 left unanswered

**13. If Medscheck was implemented in Saskatchewan, how much would you be willing to pay for this service? (Assuming that the government would pay the remainder.)**

100% of cost	50% of cost	25% of cost
5 (8%)	11 (17%)	32 (50%)

\*15 were left unanswered

\*1 patient wrote "0%"

**PART C**

**14. Are you aware that Alberta pharmacists have the authority to prescribe certain medications under special circumstances?**

Yes	No
17 (27%)	46 (72%)

\*1 left unanswered

**15. Are you aware that Saskatchewan pharmacists will soon have prescribing abilities similar to Alberta pharmacists?**

Yes	No
9 (14%)	53 (83%)

\*2 left unanswered

**16. Are you in favor of pharmacists having prescriptive authority?**

Yes	No
54 (84%)	5 (8%)

\*3 left unanswered

\*2 "unsure"

## Appendix C

### PART A

10. If you chose NO for the above question (were you comfortable asking the pharmacist questions?), please explain how we could help make you feel more comfortable.

- For some people I think that a private counseling room would be beneficial.
- If an interaction is going to take place between you and your pharmacist over medication and health issues it should be done in a private counseling room.

Additional comments in Part A:

- The Leader pharmacists are professional and always friendly. They make you feel comfortable. They are always ready to answer any questions and are always very helpful!
- The pharmacist did not discuss my medication with me this time because it was just a refill and I know why I am taking it.
- The pharmacist did not discuss my (new) medication with me, I was given a print-out about the drug instead. The important information was highlighted. I very rarely have the opportunity to speak to the pharmacist as they are very busy. After reading through the handout, I understood the side effects of my medication. I don't like to bother anyone, so if I have questions I look them up on the internet. I would be comfortable speaking to the pharmacist if the opportunity arises or if they aren't too busy.
- We are so very fortunate in our community to have Stueck Pharmacy staff. They go out of their way to assist everyone anytime. Gordon does far more than is expected – he checks individuals that live alone, etc, etc. He is often doing duties far and beyond just being a pharmacist. Hats off to Gordon & Michelle Stueck & staff.

### PART B

Additional comments in Part B:

- One patient was not in favor of Medscheck for Saskatchewan residents because: "Mikki [(RN)Nurse Practitioner] does a very good job at checking into things."
- Government should pay ALL [Medscheck] expenses.
- I would only be interested in Medscheck if it cost me less than \$20.

- I would be much more interested in Medscheck if it were free through insurance like it is for Ontario residents.

## **PART C**

16. What does “pharmacist(s) prescribing” mean to you?
- Able to give a med not yet prescribed by a doctor
  - Able to get prescriptions without doctor
  - It means that in a case where we had no doctors available (eg, Leader hospital every 3<sup>rd</sup> week) simple problems could be treated (eg, antibiotics) and perhaps prevent a more severe problem and see a person through, when you can't get to see a doctor in a larger area. It could also save a trip to emergency many miles further away.
  - Providing the best Rx for your condition after doctor diagnosis
  - Better access to meds
  - It means that when the doctors leave here every couple of years I have someone who knows my prescription needs. I feel more comfortable with a pharmacist I have known for 7 years than some new doctor who has not even passed medical exams here and some can't pass them and are let go.
  - With the shortage of doctors in our area patients could get meds sooner to alleviate pain, etc
  - There would be no need to re-visit the initial prescribing doctor to have prescriptions renewed.
  - For certain things a pharmacist will be able to prescribe medication for a patient. As far as I'm concerned, a pharmacist understands better than a doctor what to prescribe
  - It would be a big help because doctors aren't around 24/7 for appointments.
  - Less trips to the doctor office and probably the pharmacists are just as capable of filling and refilling the majority of drugs
  - Pharmacist can provide drugs without a doctor's approval
  - Awesome – I can always trust the pharmacists at Stueck's.
  - Gordon and Leah are very good at their work. If any questions, they take the time to answer. I get all my prescriptions from them because I feel very comfortable with them.
  - It would be easier to get medications needed when doctors are booked.
  - If I need a prescription of a past medication I would trust my pharmacist to prescribe it.
  - It would be easier and quicker to get meds. We won't have to wait to see a doctor, we would be able to get our meds in an emergency.

- If under conditions where you couldn't get to your doctor, he [pharmacist] would give you pills. This would be very helpful as our doctors are overworked. It is important that pharmacists know your history. Eg, antibiotics for flu etc, coated Aspirin
- Pharmacist prescribes the prescription and gives the medicine he or she decides you need.
- With the shortage of doctors continuing, placing this task in the capable hands of these "other" professionals should relieve some of the "wait" times.
- Less doctor visits for refills
- More convenience
- Pharmacists would be able to refill prescriptions that are longstanding and routine unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- The pharmacist would be able to prescribe medications without a doctor's permission. The pharmacist may not know what the patient's problem is, so I'm not in favor.
- Answer to many pertinent medical questions not answered by the doctor
- Filling out prescriptions
- It means to me that a pharmacist would be able to prescribe medications without a doctor's order. I'm not sure I agree with this.
- I would be interested. I am hesitant and would require more information.
- [The pharmacist] knows more about pills than anybody else.
- I don't know, I guess I'm in favor.
- If the pharmacist is familiar with the client and his/her medical background he would be able to refill ongoing prescriptions for that client or prescribe another drug that would meet the clients needs.
- This is the doctor's job. I am not in favor.
- With the disruption of doctors in Saskatchewan it would be a great help when prescriptions [refills] run out.
- It would help in not having to see a doctor every time you need some meds. With the shortage of doctors one often has to wait a week or more.
- No doctors involved
- Not having to see a doctor for every prescription
- Pharmacists will be able to refill existing medications or prescribe antibiotics for people.
- It would be very helpful
- Knowing what medications you require and being allowed to prescribe, based on [pharmacists] knowledge of symptoms and required curative drugs.
- To me if means after hearing about my concern/symptoms the pharmacist would prescribe a medication best suited to help with my concern/symptoms.

- We could be assured there would be no adverse reactions between medications we are already taking. The pharmacist is far more knowledgeable about meds and their possible side effects.
- With the current doctor shortage the ability of pharmacist to prescribe could help lessen the patient load for doctors.
- The authority to prescribe medications under special circumstances.
- I think that [pharmacists] prescribing could take a lot of pressure away from patients that have to wait in hospital waiting rooms for long hours for service or being turned away without [service].
- They are probably more knowledgeable than the doctors about medication because that is their field of expertise.
- It would be more convenient because sometimes doctor is unavailable. Pharmacist could give information to you about medication.
- It means prescribing of alternate, or dose changes, after initial physician prescription, with patient discussion.

16. Please share your personal opinions about pharmacists prescribing medication in Saskatchewan.

- Get doctors and nurses to stay longer than 1 month to a year. We have the “best pharmacy” around thanks to “Gordon Stueck” and all the “girls.”
- It would free up doctors for more important work
- With the shortage of doctors it could be very necessary for the people in our area
- It is a good idea. We have too many new doctors coming and going. Our pharmacists know our needs and the doctors are not here long enough to care.
- I think medications should be prescribed by the doctor who has taken the time to check the proper channels (eg, blood testing, etc.)
- I think it should be a doctor who prescribes medication because he knows your condition.
- I think it is a good choice if your pharmacist knows you well and understands your needs.
- I feel that pharmacists often have as much (and sometimes even more) drug knowledge than the doctor prescribing. In a rural area the pharmacist is often more familiar [than the doctor] with the patient and the types of medications that the patient has been using over a long period of time. This is especially true in rural areas where doctors often vary and change.
- Actually, I trust Gord more than the doctor!
- I feel that pharmacists know more about meds than some doctors.

- Most pharmacists know a great deal about medications and interactions between medications. I have great confidence in their abilities to do this service.
- It is a good idea.
- In many instances it would be helpful to get prescription refills without doctors' direct approval when appointments are hard to get.
- I am very comfortable with the Leader pharmacists filling drugs for my family.
- I believe that in most cases the pharmacist knows his client more than the doctor does. He has a more personal relationship with his client than a doctor and is easily available for medication advice. I don't think the public is aware of the fact that the pharmacist must take courses every so often to continue his service, whereas the doctors are not obligated to further their knowledge about new medications being put on the market. I think Saskatchewan should go ahead with this new idea as it would also cut back on medical expenses. Eg, patient would not have to go doctor for medication refills.
- I wouldn't always have to wait for a doctor appointment, as long as they prescribe what I need.
- It would depend upon whether the pharmacist would have access to our medical history.
- It has to be controlled.
- I think it's a good idea; should have been done already!
- Giving the pharmacists capability to prescribe medication is good because they will know what the patient is taking and other meds they have been on so they won't overmedicate the patient.
- It has to be controlled.
- I am in favor of pharmacists having prescriptive authority but only if a doctor is not available.
- Whether or not I am in favor of pharmacists' prescribing depends upon the pharmacist.
- I am in favor of pharmacists prescribing but only after they have specific training to become certified. I have confidence in our local pharmacy (Stueck's), however a blanket approval across the province would have to be well controlled.
- I am in favor of pharmacists' prescribing. Pharmacists can give information (side effects) and can spend more one-on-one time with you.
- Pharmacists have more time to spend with you reviewing your medication and your symptoms regarding side effects.
- If for example you couldn't get in to see the doctor I think that having a pharmacist authorized to refill a medication would be a good thing.
- The prescriptive authority of a pharmacist should in no way replace a diagnostic assessment from a doctor.

- They [pharmacists] are certainly qualified; sometimes more qualified than some “locum” that you may never see again.
- I feel it would be a great idea for pharmacists to be able to prescribe medication especially as in these times our smaller communities are so often without doctors.
- Excellent service
- As it is sometimes impossible to get to see a doctor, and that pharmacists are aware of all medications taken, I would trust our pharmacists to prescribe medications.