

Healthwatch Cornwall

Community Pharmacies in
Cornwall Report

October 2015





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Executive Summary

After hearing patient feedback on pharmacy services and following on from previous research by Healthwatch Cornwall (HC), which had shown an appetite for people to access more services from community pharmacy¹, HC has carried out a focussed study to look at current pharmacy services and how they are received, as well as additional services people might like to access through their pharmacy.

Primary data for the survey was collected from HC public events within the community, through Survey Monkey via the HC website and through a number of focus sessions within specific pharmacies.

The investigation showed people had more confidence when talking to a pharmacist they saw regularly, they felt staff were helpful in providing advice and support in a polite way and the majority had no issues with regular medication being in stock.

There were concerns over privacy during conversations and waiting times for prescription collection in some pharmacies.

People stated there were many services that they would willingly access from the pharmacist, from advice on taking and the purpose of medication, health checks and testing, flu vaccinations and minor ailment services.

A number of recommendations have been made which include increasing privacy and clearer information about staff and services that are available in store.

There are suggestions for improving services for younger people accessing pharmacy, and also for improving links between GPs and pharmacies that could have a positive impact on ensuring the right medication is always given.

1. Buist, J. & Pritchard, D. (2015) *Perceptions of Out-of-Hours, GP and Pharmacy Services Report in Cornwall*. Truro: Healthwatch Cornwall.



Introduction

This research project was initiated by feedback from people who have been accessing pharmacy services in Cornwall.

HC had received a number of patient feedback comments that indicated people accessing pharmacy services had had a number of problems with their pharmacy.

In a study on community pharmacy² of 10,000 adults aged over 35 years, only a small number of respondents (11.9 per cent) recalled asking for advice about general health, medicine or specific illness in a pharmacy during the previous month for themselves or someone else.

HC decided research in to what types of services people would find useful when accessing a community pharmacy in Cornwall could aid in the commissioning of them. Previous research conducted by HC would also be taken into account in this study.

Research Questions:

- What type of problems (if any) are patients experiencing with the pharmacy service in Cornwall and can this be improved?
- What types of health service are patients willing to receive from their community pharmacy that they may currently be accessing from their GP surgery?

Objectives:

- To collect patient experience and views through a targeted questionnaire.
- To compare service quality issues between locations across the whole of Cornwall.
- To identify areas of healthcare where GP surgeries and pharmacies could potentially work together in sharing patient care.

2. Boardman, H, Lewis, M & Croft, P. (2005) Use of community pharmacies: a population-based survey. *Journal of Public Health*. 27(3), pp.254-262.



Background and Methodology

1. Authority for this project was given by the Healthwatch Cornwall Steering Group on March 31, 2015. A number of themes were raised from patient feedback and these were addressed in the research.
2. A task group was set up to determine the methodology. Patients' feedback in regards to pharmacy services had been received from across the county and therefore the primary research encompassed all areas of Cornwall. A questionnaire was seen as the most suitable way of collecting the primary data that would be used to address the research questions. This questionnaire was distributed electronically via Survey Monkey. The link was available through the Healthwatch Cornwall website, Facebook page, Twitter account and its monthly newsletter. A meeting was held with the Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC) in order to form an agreement on accessing pharmacy premises to carry out questionnaires with patients. A hard copy of the questionnaire was distributed at the Royal Cornwall Show and other events being held in Cornwall.
3. The target sample was anyone that accessed pharmacy services across the county. Data collection aimed to achieve a mix of population demographics such as age and gender. There was an opportunity for free comment on the questionnaire and any received were entered on Healthwatch Cornwall's database.
4. The questionnaire contained 10 questions (**Appendix i**), nine of which focused around the service respondents received from local pharmacies. The final question asked patients the type of service that they would be happy to receive from the pharmacy that they may currently be receiving from the GP surgery. Quantitative data was collected so that comparisons could be made between localities. A yes or no response was used to gauge respondents' feelings to each of the questions.
5. Primary research was conducted between April 1 and August 31, 2015.



Main Findings

648 questionnaires were completed. The detailed analysis of the results is shown below. Charts can be found in (Appendix iii).

An analysis of the demographics is shown in (Appendix ii).

Women surveyed exceeded men surveyed (69% and 31% respectively) and the age range of 25-49 was most represented (37%). All age groups from under 18 years and exceeding 75 years were covered and there was a good spread of responses from all age groups. Responses from across the county showed good coverage, as shown in the postcode analysis. Responses were received for 42 postcode areas shown in the graph (Appendix iv) and the areas that gained most responses shown on the map (Appendix iv).

Question 1: Do you visit a pharmacy on a regular basis?

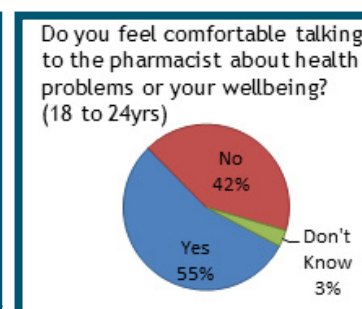
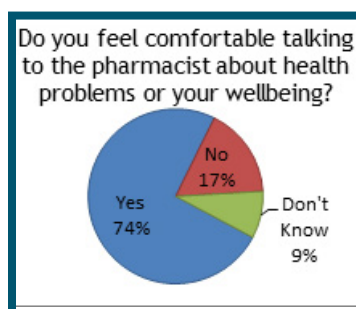
The first question was used to identify whether patients visit one pharmacy on a regular basis or if they visit many pharmacies. A high proportion of responses were from people visiting one pharmacy on a regular basis (69% overall).



Question 2: Do you feel comfortable talking to your pharmacist about health problems or your wellbeing?

Overall, people felt comfortable to talk to the pharmacist (74% overall) about health problems and wellbeing. When looking at age group responses, there was little difference (68% to 80% felt comfortable). However, the age band 18 to 24 years was

noticeably less comfortable talking to the pharmacist about their health problems (only 55% willing to do so). Almost one third (29%) of 18-24 year olds gave the reason for not talking to the pharmacist as issues of privacy, preferring to talk to the GP or nurse or feeling uncomfortable. For example, "The chemist is usually busy and what I want to ask is a bit private". Other respondents that replied 'no' to this question went on to explain, "If it was the same pharmacist each time the answer would be 'yes'. But it's always a different pharmacist".

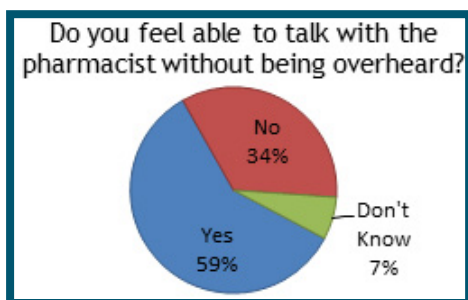


Question 3: Do you feel able to talk with the pharmacist without being overheard?

Overall, a considerable number (34%) did not feel they were able to discuss information with the pharmacist without being overheard.

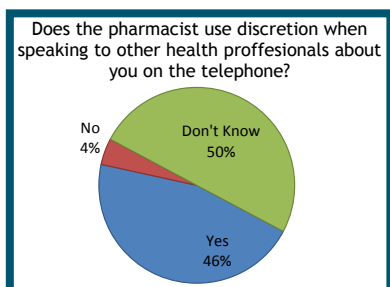


This is one of the strongest negative themes that has emerged from this research. 59% of patients felt they could talk to the pharmacist without being overheard, but this was a fairly low majority.



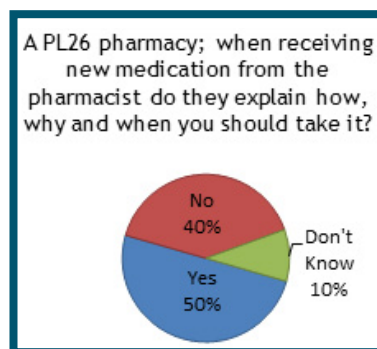
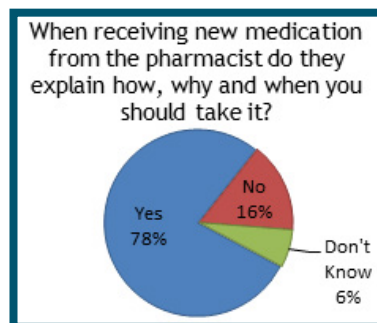
Question 4: Does the pharmacist use discretion when speaking to other health professionals about you on the telephone?

This question was felt valid initially due to a complaint having been received about a patient's experience within a pharmacy. However, this was not found to be a general issue across pharmacies in Cornwall. Most pharmacies were found to have a telephone out of hearing of other patients and customers. In pharmacies where telephone calls were audible, it was found that the pharmacist took steps to make calls when the pharmacy was empty. Half of respondents expressed a "don't know" to this question due to never having had this experience in the pharmacy.



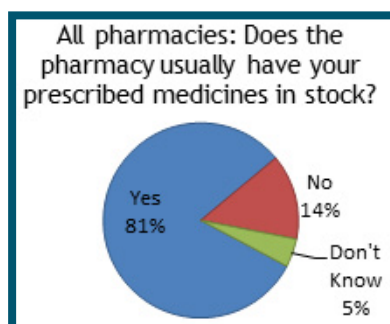
Question 5: When receiving new medication from the pharmacist do they explain how, why and when you should take it?

Overall, 78% of respondents said they received an explanation about new medication. This did drop to 50% in one area of Cornwall (PL26 postcode), leaving 50% of respondents without an explanation about new medication.



Question 6: Does your local pharmacy usually have your repeat medicines in stock?

This question revealed that overall pharmacies are keeping patients regular medication in stock to a fairly high extent (81%). However, this varied quite widely between individual pharmacies. Two of the pharmacies were keeping less than 50% of respondents regular medication in stock.





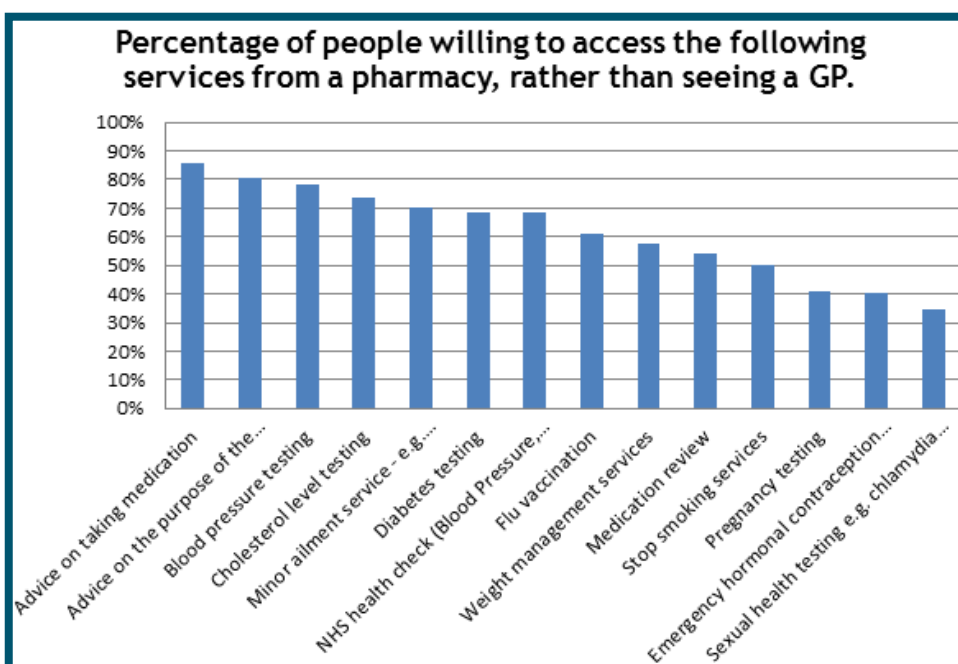
Question 10: The following services can be accessed from your GP surgery. Which ones would you be equally happy to access from a pharmacy?

a) Advice on taking medication	b) Advice on the purpose of medication
c) Blood pressure testing	d) Cholesterol level testing
e) Diabetes testing	f) Emergency contraception
g) Flu vaccination	h) Medication review
i) Weight management services	j) NHS health check
k) Sexual health testing	l) Stop smoking services
m) Minor ailments service: e.g. conjunctivitis, constipation, cystitis, headaches, hayfever, indigestion, thrush.	

The majority of patients were happy to receive advice on taking medication (78.4%) and advice on the purpose of their medication (73.9%). However, only half of respondents were happy to receive a medication review from the pharmacist (50.0%). At least two thirds of respondents were happy to have their blood pressure checked (71.3%), cholesterol level tested (67.3%) and use the minor ailments service (64.4%). Almost two thirds of respondents were happy to have a NHS health check (69%) and diabetes tested (62.5%). More

than half of respondents were happy to have the flu vaccination (55.6%) and use weight management services (52.5%). The stop smoking services also received a fairly high response (45.8%).

Emergency contraception services (37.3%) and sexual health testing (31.6%) were responded to less by the 65 year and above age groups, and therefore naturally received lower numbers of response. However, more than half of those aged 25 to 49 responded positively to this question.





Conclusions

The responses from the Cornish population highlight the importance that community pharmacies currently play in the health care arena. The points below highlight the main findings:

- Most people (69%) were found to visit one pharmacy on a regular basis.
- A large number (74%) of respondents felt comfortable to talk to the pharmacist about their health. Additional feedback stated that this was more likely if a regular pharmacist was in place than if the pharmacy was run by locum pharmacists. The 18 to 24 age group are particularly affected by the lack of privacy in pharmacies. Of this age group 55% felt comfortable to talk to the pharmacist about their health.
- Of the respondents, 216 (34%) did not feel able to talk to the pharmacist without being overheard.
- Most patients (78%) have new medication explained to them. However, this is not consistent in all pharmacies across Cornwall.
- The majority of respondents (81%) found that their regular medication is kept in stock by their pharmacy.
- A very high number of respondents (93%) found the pharmacy staff helpful and polite when dealing with their enquiry.
- Additional feedback left by respondents stated that pharmacies are doing well at providing a quality service. Staff were found to have a good attitude and provided support and advice.
- Respondents stated that improvements could be made in some pharmacies by increasing staffing levels and reducing waiting times for prescription collection. It was felt increasing privacy for patients and reviewing pharmacy opening times were also desirable.
- Pharmacy opening times are an issue for a number of respondents, particularly over the lunch hour. Patients wishing to collect a prescription or buy a 'Pharmacy only' medicine are currently unable to do so if the pharmacist is not on the premises.



Conclusions

- Respondents are happy to access the following services through their pharmacy with varying degrees of interest:

Advice on taking medication	78%
Advice on the purpose of medication	74%
Blood pressure check	71%
NHS health check	69%
Diabetes testing	69%
Cholesterol level testing	67%
Minor ailments scheme	64%
Flu vaccination	56%
Weight management services	53%
Medication review	50%
Stop smoking services	46%
Emergency contraception	37%
Sexual health testing	32%



Recommendations

There are six recommendations that have been produced from the final analysis of the research. A number of these recommendations have already been adopted in some community pharmacies in Cornwall.

1. Patients prefer to talk to someone familiar about their health problems. If “increased pharmacy services” are being offered, the same pharmacist should be available to offer patient advice and support.
2. Commissioners and pharmacy providers need to support ways to make it less daunting for the 18 to 24 age group to be able to talk to the pharmacist about health problems. Digital technology could be integrated into pharmacy services to serve this age group better. For example, a virtual pharmacist (computer screen) within store that would be able to assist with diagnosis of minor ailments and advice on medication. This will reduce pressure on staff, enable customers to access information privately and reduce waiting times. This type of technology is already available in Cornwall.
3. Pharmacies need to find ways of making conversations with patients less audible to other customers using the pharmacy, either through use of a consulting room or by other means. One respondent suggested a ‘privacy booth’. Make it clear to patients that a more private area can be accessed for a more personal conversation either through signage, verbally or both.
4. Pharmacies need to keep a selection of regular patient medication in stock. If patients have a delay in taking their medication this could have a harmful effect on their health.
5. Pharmacies and GP practices should work together so that the repeat dispensing service and repeat prescription service work well. This will ensure patients’ medication is ready for collection at the right time for the patient each month. Pharmacists should ensure within this system that there is a conversation with the patient to check if any medication has changed. Ideally an interconnected service, such as GURU should be introduced so that pharmacists can access patient information on current patient medication and allergies.
6. Individual pharmacies should clearly display information on advice and services that are available to the public, as well as information on their staff and their qualifications. This will inform patients on the type of advice they may ask pharmacy assistants, dispensing technicians and the pharmacist.



Appendix i.

Pharmacy questionnaire used to collect primary data:

Pharmacy Questionnaire



Healthwatch Cornwall talks with, and listens to, people from Cornwall's diverse communities about their experience of health and social care.

We then share this feedback with people who plan and run services to work towards positive change, where needed.

We want to learn more about your experience of, and thoughts about, improving or changing community pharmacy services in Cornwall.

Please complete the questionnaire and include your email address to be in with a chance to win a **£50 voucher** of your choice, (closing date 31st August 2015).

Age:	Under 18	18-24	25 - 49	50 - 64	65 - 74	Over 75	
Gender:	Male	Female	Other:	Location (first part of postcode only):	Example:PL12		
If you could place a tick in the appropriate boxes.					YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1. Do you visit a pharmacy on a regular basis?							
Pharmacy Name (optional):							
2. Do you feel comfortable talking to the pharmacist about health problems or your well-being?							
If no, why is that?							
3. Do you feel able to talk with the pharmacist without being overheard?							
4. Does the pharmacist use discretion when speaking to other health professionals about you on the telephone?							
5. When receiving new medication from the pharmacist do they explain how, why and when you should take it?							
6. Does the pharmacy usually have your prescribed medicines in stock?							
7. Is the pharmacist polite and helpful when dealing with your enquiry?							
8. What is the pharmacy doing well?							
9. If you could improve the pharmacy, in what way would that be?							



Appendix i.

10. The following services can be accessed from your GP surgery. Which ones would you be equally happy to access from a pharmacy? (Tick all boxes that apply)✓

Advice on taking medication	NHS Health Check (Blood Pressure, Cholesterol & Body Mass Index)
Advice on the purpose of the medication	Pregnancy test
Blood pressure testing	Sexual health testing e.g. chlamydia testing
Cholesterol level testing	Stop smoking services
Diabetes testing	Weight management services
Emergency hormonal contraception services	Flu vaccination
Medication review	
Minor Ailment Service e.g. conjunctivitis, constipation, cystitis, headaches, hay fever, indigestion, thrush	

11. Any additional comments on any of the pharmacies that you have visited in the last six months?

12. Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

For your chance to win a voucher of your choice worth £50 please include your e-mail address below and you will also receive our monthly newsletter.

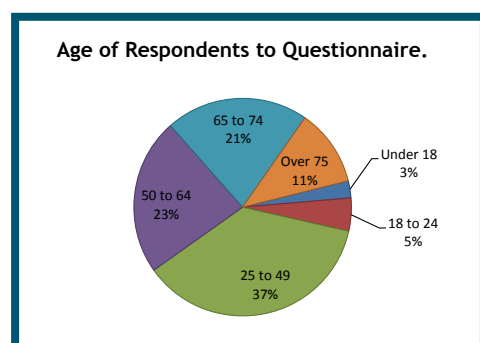
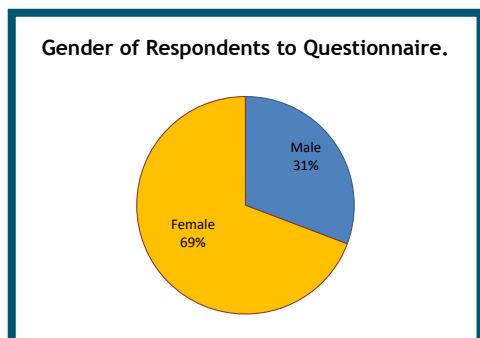
All information is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

e-mail:



Appendix ii.

Analysis of demographic information:



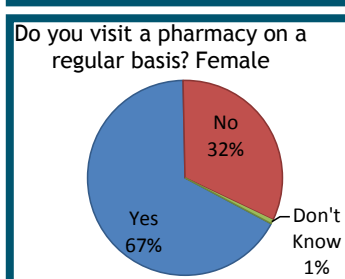
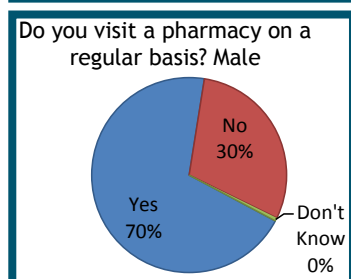
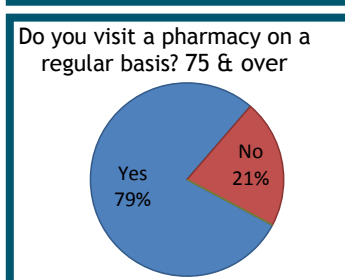
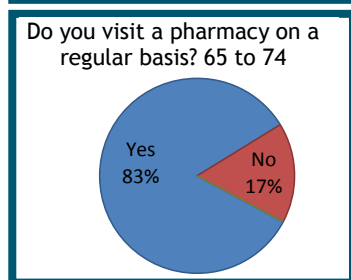
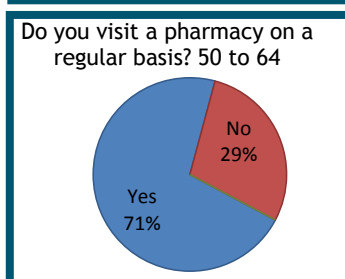
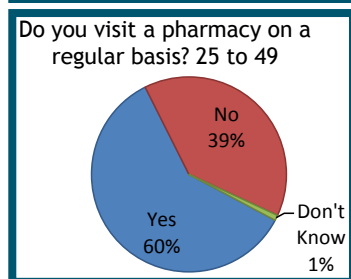
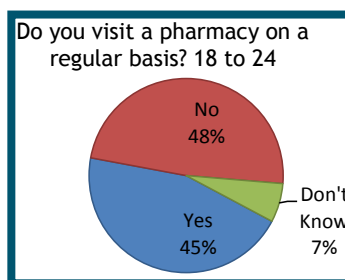
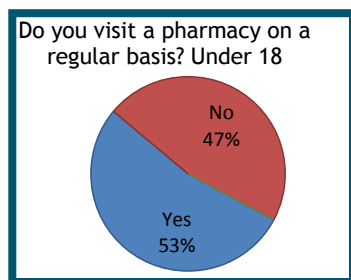
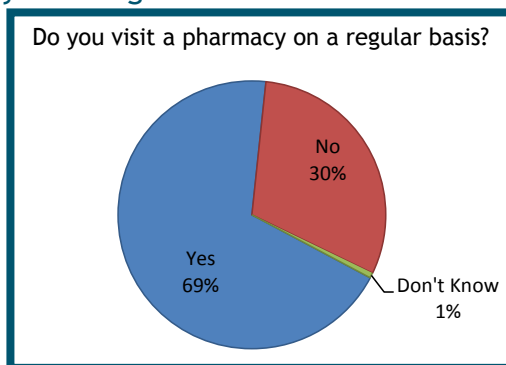


Appendix iii.

Appendix iii.a through to Appendix iii.f displaying a breakdown of all response data.

Appendix iii.a

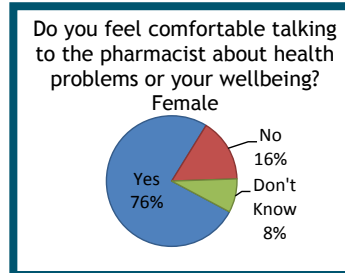
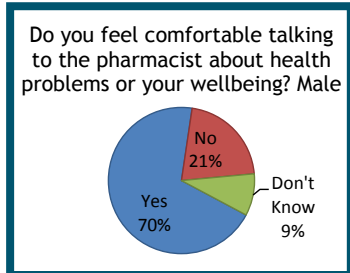
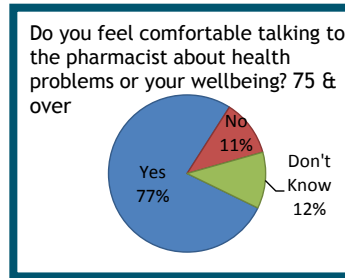
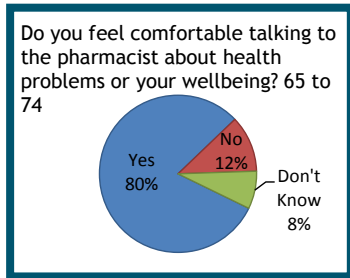
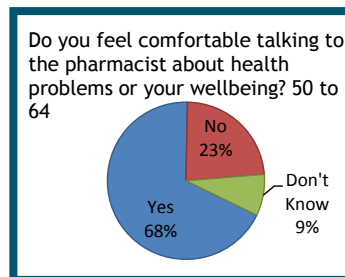
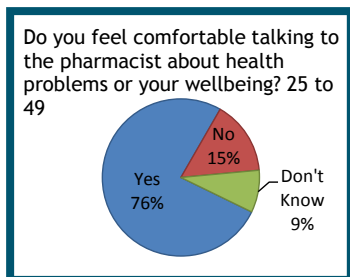
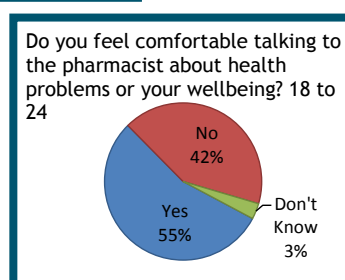
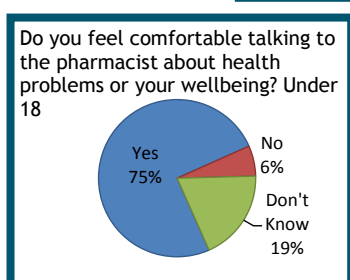
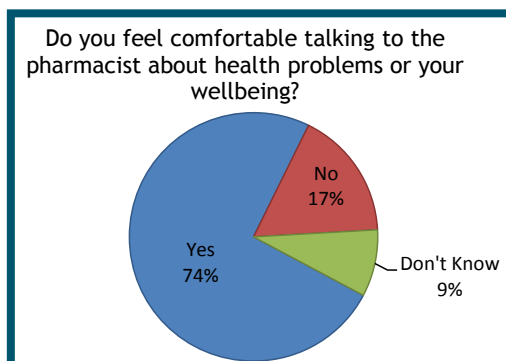
Do you visit a pharmacy on a regular basis?





Appendix iii.b

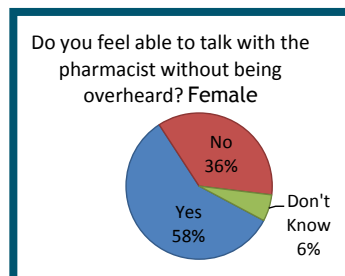
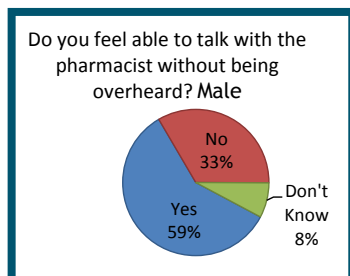
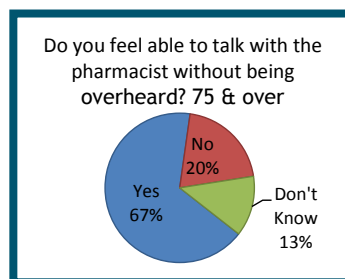
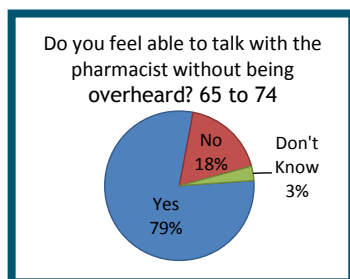
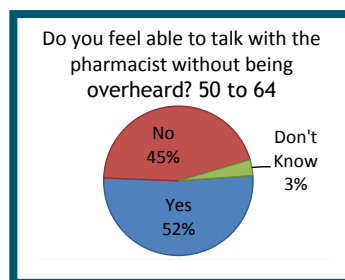
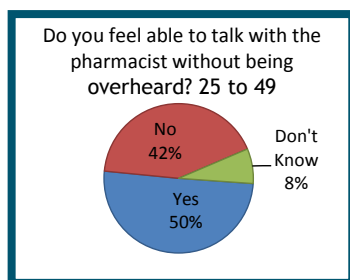
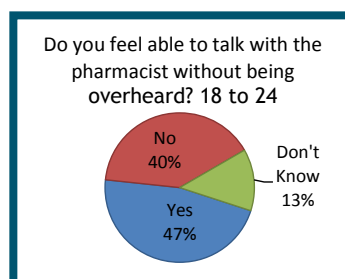
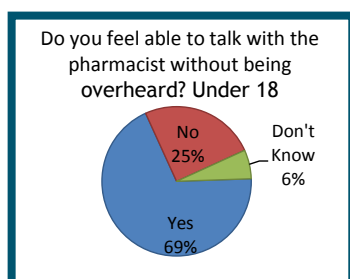
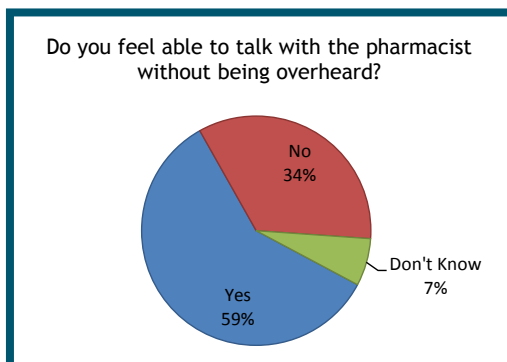
Do you feel comfortable talking to the pharmacist about health problems or your well-being?





Appendix iii.c

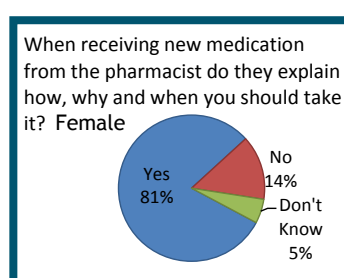
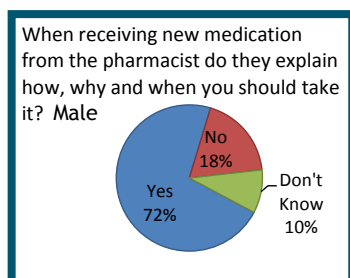
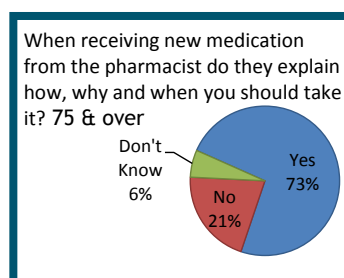
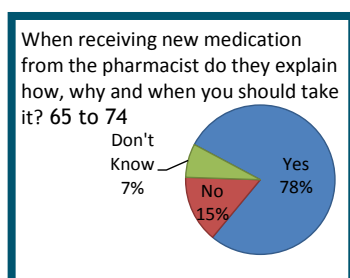
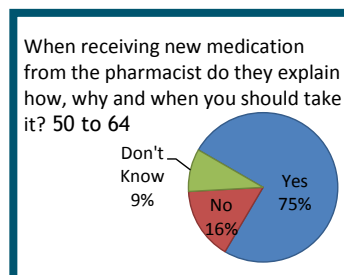
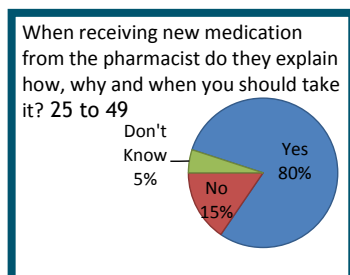
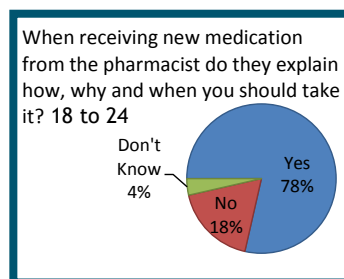
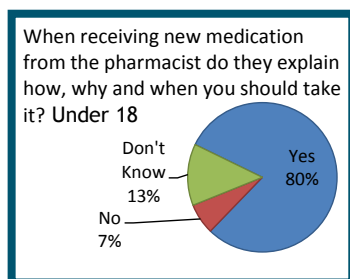
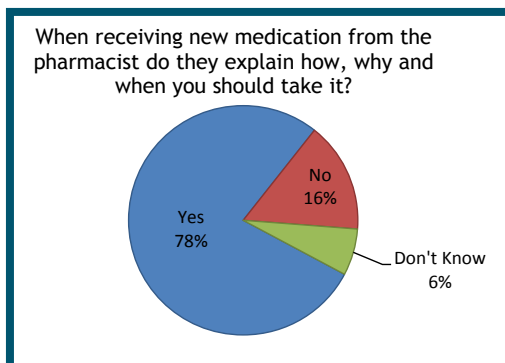
Do you feel able to talk with the pharmacist without being overheard?





Appendix iii.d

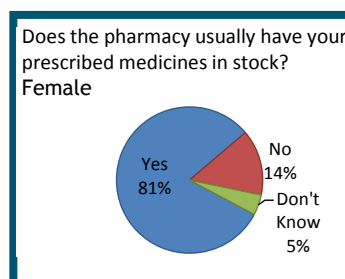
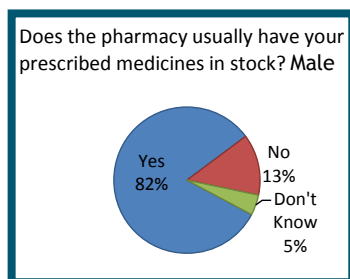
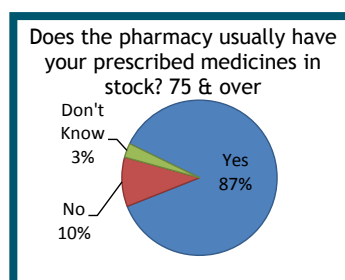
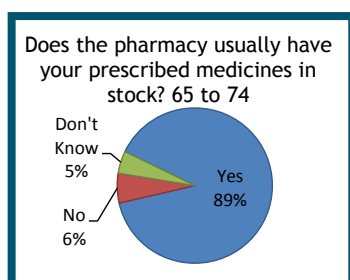
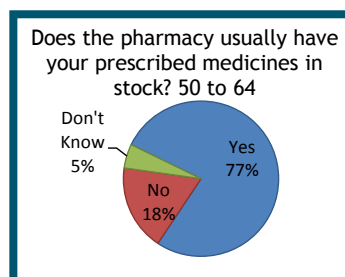
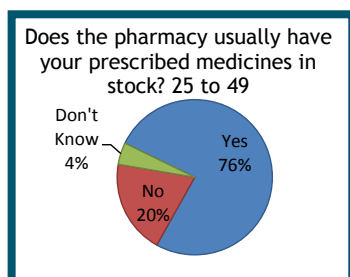
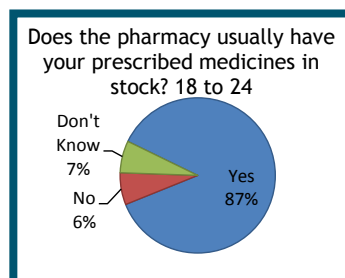
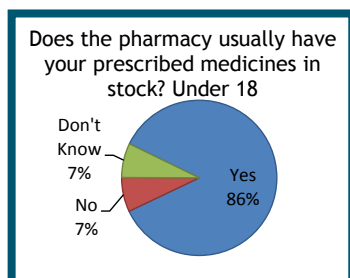
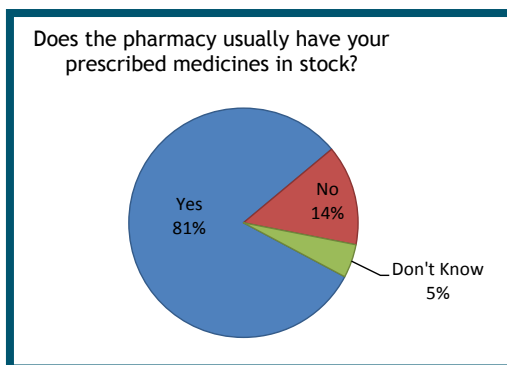
When receiving new medication from the pharmacist do they explain how, why and when you should take it?





Appendix iii.e

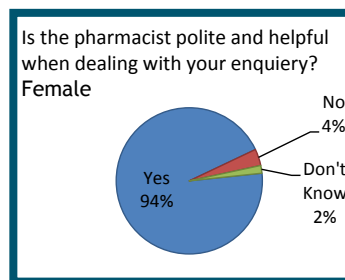
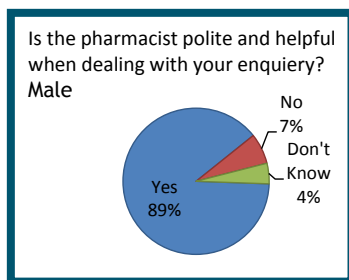
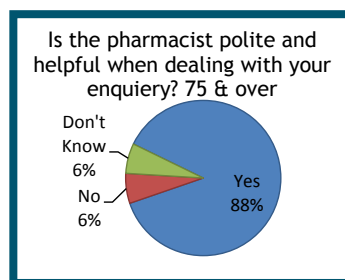
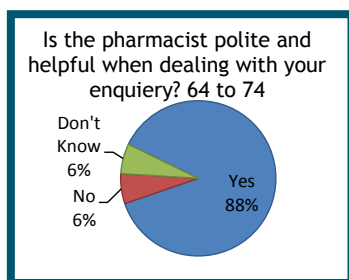
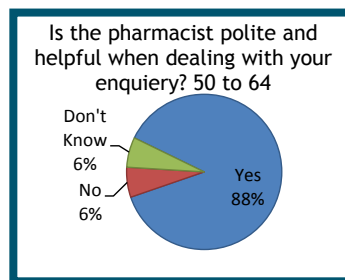
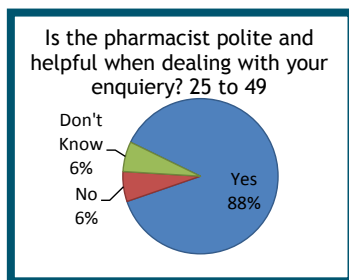
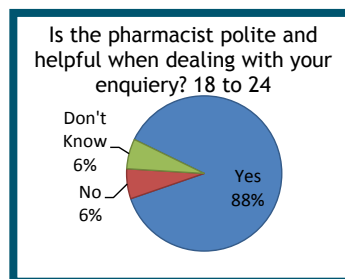
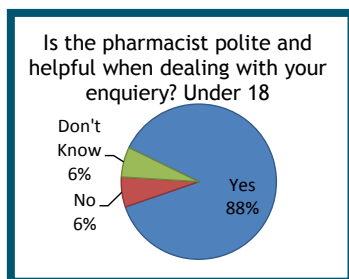
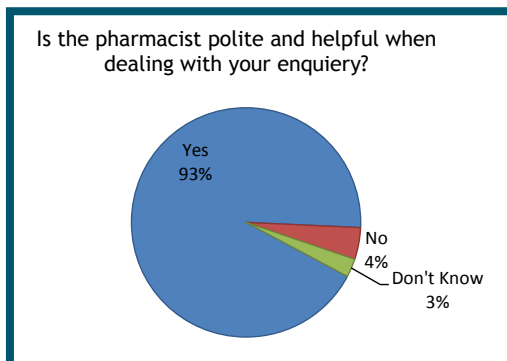
Does the pharmacy usually have your prescribed medicines in stock?





Appendix iii.f

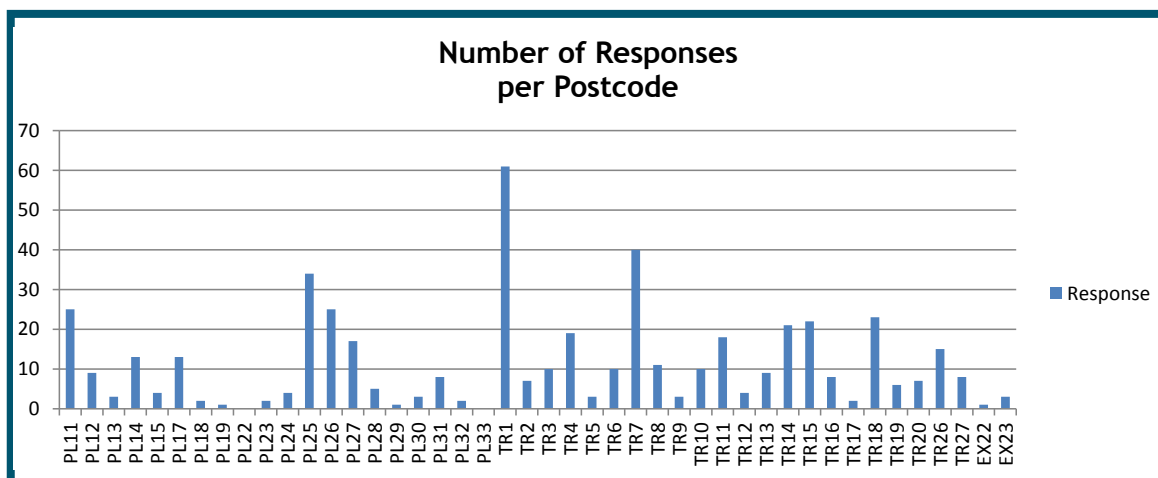
Is the pharmacist polite and helpful when dealing with your enquiry?



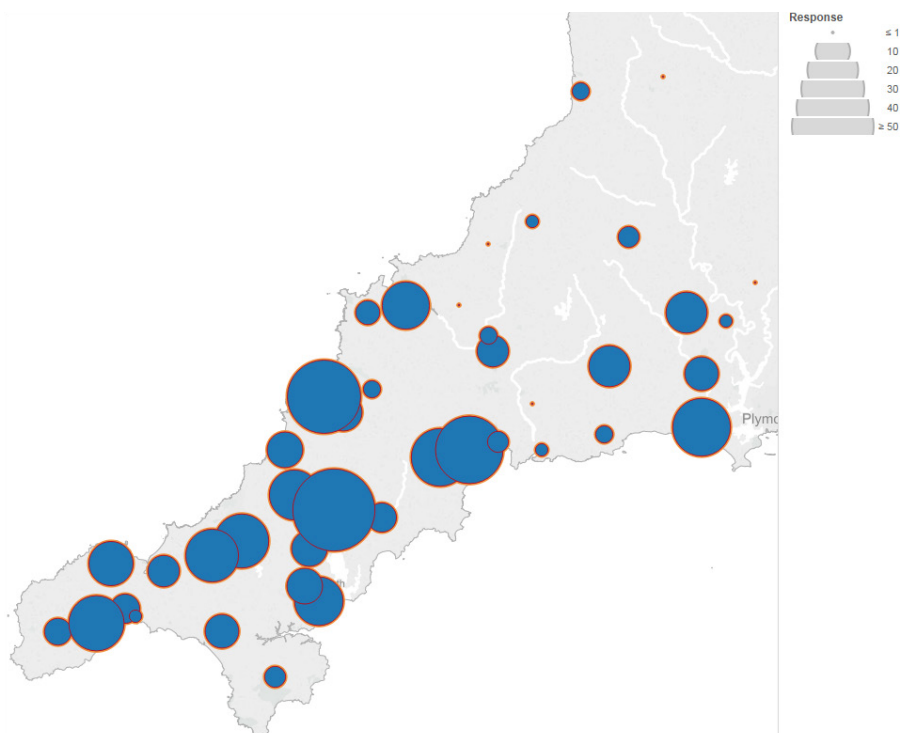


Appendix iv.

Respondents location breakdown:



Map of Cornwall showing location of responses to questionnaire. The larger the circle the larger the response to the questionnaire.





Appendix v.

Bibliography:

Reference:

1. Buist, J. & Pritchard, D. (2015) *Perceptions of Out-of-Hours, GP and Pharmacy Services Report in Cornwall*. Truro: Healthwatch Cornwall.
2. Boardman, H, Lewis, M & Croft, P. (2005) Use of community pharmacies: a population-based survey. *Journal of Public Health*. 27(3), pp.254-262.

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