

Determination of Barriers to In-House Pharmacy Utilization

An anonymous patient satisfaction survey delivered to HealthPoint patients to determine the valued characteristics of a pharmacy and barriers to pharmacy utilization.

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GE- National Medical Fellowship Primary Care Leadership Program- 2014

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to develop a measure of patient satisfaction with the community health clinic pharmacy and additionally establish the areas of importance in pharmacy for patients. HealthPoint, a community health clinic, has 13 health centers located around Seattle, Wa. Most of these health centers have in-house pharmacies and medication dispensing capabilities. The pharmacy utilization rate for the Kent and Federal Way clinics specifically were both below 50%. The data was collected by a self-administered questionnaire to both patients who use the health clinic pharmacy and those who do not in the clinic lobby. Of the 69 questionnaires received 46% currently used the HealthPoint pharmacy. The HealthPoint pharmacy scored comparably in wait time, pharmacy appearance and general satisfaction and more favorably in pharmacist interactions. The main barrier to pharmacy utilization was the hours of operation. It is not currently feasible for HealthPoint to change their pharmacy hours however they can capitalize on other aspects of the in-house pharmacy.

Keywords: Pharmacy, Patient Satisfaction, Barrier, Questionnaire, Community Pharmacy, Survey

Introduction

There is a significant impetus for community health clinics to become patient centered health homes. HealthPoint, a community health center in South Seattle, provides medical, dental, natural medicine and pharmacy services in one location. Most locations have an in-house pharmacy or medication dispensing capabilities, however currently many patients are not utilizing this option. As a community health clinic HealthPoint is eligible for the 340B reduced drug pricing program which allows centers to provide medications at reduced prices, nevertheless patients continue to opt out of using the pharmacy. In a previous study of community pharmacies patients satisfaction improved with formal consultations about their conditions, shared decision making and collaboration with the physician¹. HealthPoint uses an outside agency to conduct patient satisfaction phone questionnaires with patients that utilize the pharmacy on a monthly basis, though this information can be gathered up to 6 weeks after the pharmacy transaction has occurred and does not include patients not currently using the in-house pharmacy. A measure to determine real time satisfaction with the pharmacy was necessary to elicit immediate feedback about pharmacy experiences. A one page satisfaction survey was developed to assess patient views². Patients were randomly selected in the lobby to complete the survey about HealthPoint or their current outside pharmacy. This information would be used to provide recommendations to HealthPoint to improve pharmacy usage.

Methodology

The survey was developed by combining questions from the current patient satisfaction phone questionnaire, questions from previous research on community pharmacy satisfaction^{1,2} and free answer fill in the blank questions to assess patient opinions (see Appendix 1). Once completed the survey was translated into Spanish by myself (see Appendix 2). The subjects the survey

addressed were current pharmacy, number of prescriptions, overall health, wait times, Likert items to assess attitude toward pharmacist, and free response to ascertain important characteristics of a pharmacy.

The survey was conducted over one week in the lobby of the Kent and Federal Way HealthPoint locations. Patients were approached by myself while waiting in the HealthPoint lobby, therefore participants would encompass both those who do and don't utilize the HealthPoint pharmacy. 69 completed surveys were received between the two clinics.

Results: Of the 69 respondents, 46% used the HealthPoint pharmacy. The proportion of patients using the pharmacy at the Kent location was significantly higher (Figure 1). Of the

participants surveyed at the Kent ~55% used the in-house pharmacy. The Federal Way location results showed 25% usage of the pharmacy.

To gauge the attitudes of current HealthPoint pharmacy customers I looked at the responses

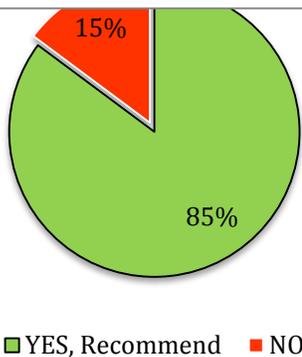
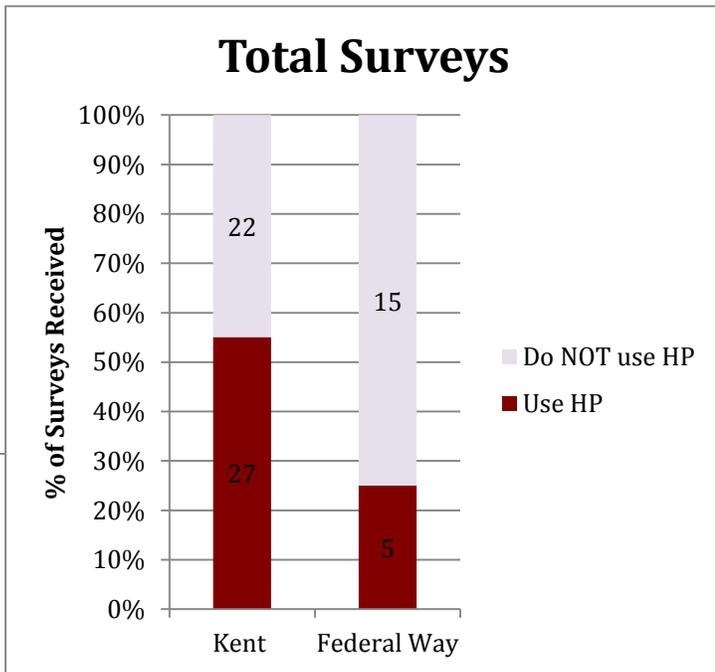


Figure 2. Kent Recommendations

Federal Way- Would you Recommend?

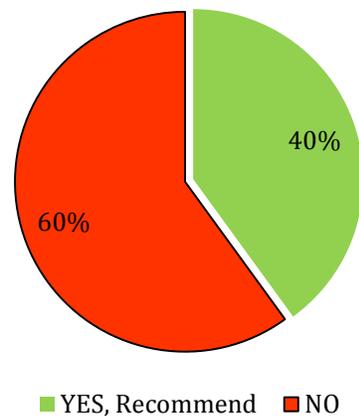


Figure 3. Federal Way Recommendations

to the question “Would you recommend your family or friend to the HealthPoint Pharmacy?”

The Kent pharmacy (Figure 2), again, showed stronger satisfaction with their service. In calculating this graph, I used participants who currently use the HealthPoint Pharmacy and those who had previously used the HealthPoint Pharmacy to more accurately gauge participant attitudes. The Federal Way location only had 40% of current and past customers recommending the pharmacy, leaving 60% unwilling to recommend HealthPoint to family or friends.

The wait times for the HealthPoint pharmacy and Non-HealthPoint pharmacy were compiled and shown as percentages to allow for direct comparison between the groups. The majority of the wait times were between 0 -20 minutes for both groups. The Kent location had the highest amount of patients waiting 10-20 minutes for an average of 3.75 medications. The data for the Federal Way pharmacy was equally split between all time frames.

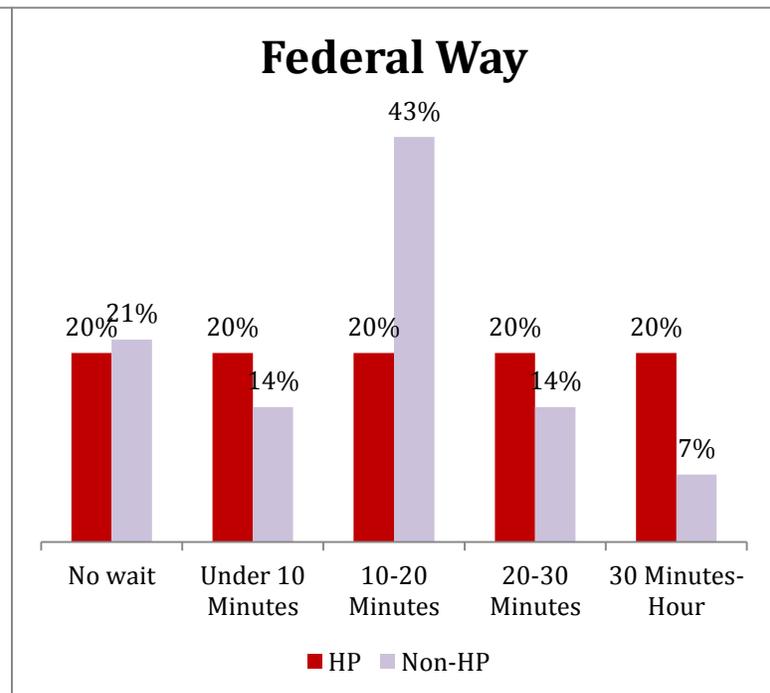
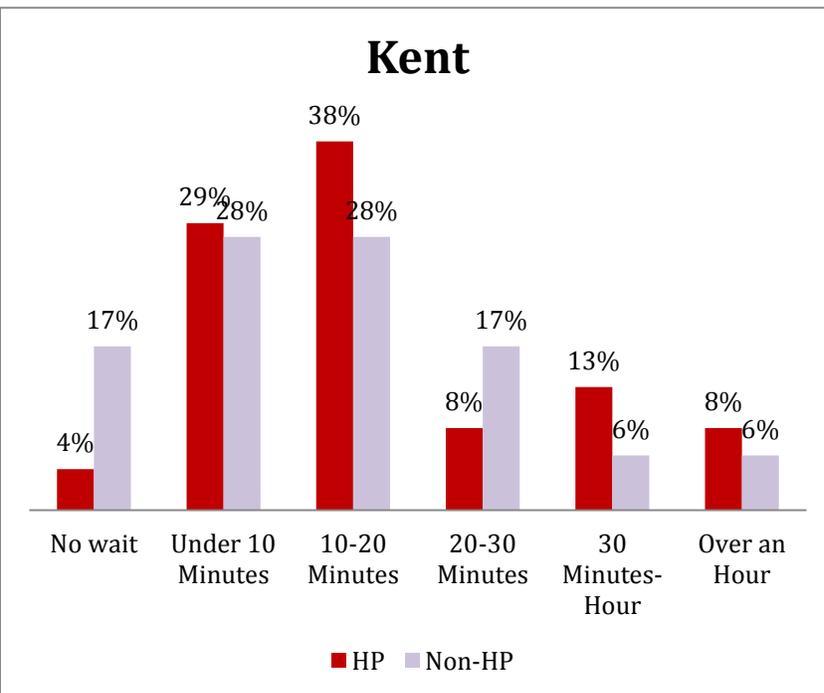


Figure 4. Wait Time for Kent HP and Non-HP Pharmacy

Figure 5. Wait Time for Federal Way HP and Non-HP Pharmacy

The Likert item to assess patient attitudes were converted from the Likert Scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree to a numerical value. Strongly Agree=5 down to Strongly Disagree=1. The numerical values were averaged for each line item and compared in groups of HealthPoint and Non-HealthPoint pharmacy (Table 1)

	Kent HP	Kent Non-HP	Federal Way HP	Federal Way Non-HP
I find the pharmacy conveniently located	4.24	4.52	4	4.45
In the pharmacy I wasn't kept waiting long to be attended to	3.72	4.23	4.5	4.18
I like the appearance of the pharmacy	4.28	4	4.75	4.1
The pharmacist spent as much time as was necessary with me	4.2	4.17	4.25	3.9
The pharmacist knew how to explain things to me in an understandable manner	4.32	4.35	4.5	4.18
The pharmacist carefully listened to me	4.24	4.23	4.25	4.09
The pharmacist answered all my questions and worries	4.2	4.29	4.25	4.09
The pharmacist knew how to help me with expert advice	4.21	4.24	4.25	4.09

Table 1. Averaged Scores for Likert Assessment

Overall the survey participants took an average of 3.9 medications. Kent averaged 3.75 medications per respondent and Federal Way averaged 4.35 medications per respondent. A question on the survey attempted to identify the patient's view of their own health. The question was "How would you rate your overall health?" with answer choices of Excellent, Very Good, Fair, Poor and Bad. Each answer was translated into a numerical value and averaged to determine the mean health of those who took the survey Excellent =4, Very Good= 3, Fair =2, Poor =1 and Bad =0. The Kent location averaged 2.4 for their health score, close to the middle between fair and very good. The Federal Way clinic averaged 2.29 in their responses, which translates to a little above fair'

Discussion: Overall HealthPoint scored comparably to Non-HealthPoint pharmacies. The Federal Way pharmacy had less positive results with the number of patients using the pharmacy and readiness to recommend HealthPoint to family and friends. I believe the results could be skewed because of the low number of responses by the Federal Way clinic. HealthPoint patients in the Federal Way clinic had a higher decline rate than the Kent pharmacy although fewer patients were approached. Additional responses from the Federal Way clinic would provide a more accurate picture of patient satisfaction with the pharmacy. The Federal Way location was recently remodeled to help clearly identify the pharmacy as an option in the lobby, it is believed that before the remodel patients were unaware that the in-house pharmacy was an option Both HealthPoint pharmacies scored well in the pharmacist ratings, meaning those who do use the HealthPoint pharmacy feel cared for by the providers. Beginning this research it was

hypothesized that the wait time would be the factor that deterred patients from using the pharmacy, however the times were shown to be comparable and that should not be a barrier to usage.

The free answer responses were combined for all participants and the main areas that participants voiced interest in were:

- The knowledge of the pharmacists. Patients want to feel the pharmacist is knowledgeable about all their medications and can accurately instruct them on drug interactions and discount opportunities.
- Communication. Having warm, friendly, and caring staff that are willing to explain (in their language) is important to satisfaction.
- Affordability. \$4 programs at Walmart and other large retail pharmacies provide stiff competition for the community health pharmacy.
- Short wait. Participants value their time and do not want to wait a long time to receive their medication, regardless of number of prescriptions filled.
- Convenience/ Availability. Drive- through and weekend pharmacies offer more opportunities for access.

In my observations at HealthPoint I noticed that most of the time the Medical Assistant (MA) will ask “Is [Non-HealthPoint Pharmacy] still your pharmacy?” or “Would you still like us to send your prescriptions to [Non-HealthPoint Pharmacy]?” This interaction provides an opportunity for change and to possibly attract more HealthPoint Pharmacy consumers.

Lastly, the survey was conducted by myself in the lobbies of HealthPoint. I am able to speak Spanish and English, nonetheless that doesn't not begin to cover the languages spoken by

patients. It would be advantageous to translate this survey into Punjabi, Burmese, Arabic, and Korean to give a more accurate portrait of the patients of HealthPoint.

Recommendations:

HealthPoint is indeed a health home and should highlight and advertise the collaboration and contact the pharmacist and physician have when using the in-house pharmacy. This would ensure the safest prescribing practices for the patient and both providers would continue to build trust and rapport with the patient.

The second recommendation is to omit the option to send prescriptions to alternate pharmacies. The MA would introduce the idea of sending the prescription to the HealthPoint pharmacy and the provider would offer to send the prescriptions in house if needed at the visit.

Conclusion: HealthPoint provides a valuable service that is not being fully utilized by patients. The In-House pharmacy scored comparably or more favorably in all categories leading me to believe that there is no significant barrier to pharmacy utilization besides convenience. HealthPoint providers from MA to Physician should offer the in-house pharmacy before asking to send a prescription elsewhere. HealthPoint can also capitalize on the closeness and collaboration of pharmacist and physician to provide the best care.

References:

¹Kassam, Rosemin (2012). Patient Satisfaction with Pharmaceutical Care Delivery in Community Pharmacies. *Patient Preference and Adherence*; Number 6, 337 - 348

²Panvelkar, Pradnya (2009). Measurement of patient satisfaction with community pharmacy services: a review, *Pharmacy World Science*, 31: 525-537

³Traverso, Maria Luz (2007). Questionnaire to assess patient satisfaction with pharmaceutical care in Spanish language. *International Journal for Quality Healthcare*; Volume 19, Number 4, 217- 224.

Pharmacy Satisfaction Survey

Please circle an answer:

1. Do you currently use the HealthPoint Pharmacy to fill your prescriptions? Yes No
2. If not, have you ever used the HealthPoint Pharmacy? Yes No
3. Do you get prescriptions at more than one pharmacy? Yes No
4. How frequently do you need to use the pharmacy? Weekly Biweekly Monthly
5. How many medications do you usually fill at the pharmacy? _____
6. At your current pharmacy how much time did you have to wait in total to pick up your prescription?
 No wait Under 10 minutes 10-20 minutes 20 -30 minutes
 30minutes – 1 hour Over and hour Do not remember
7. What is your satisfaction with the wait experience? Poor Fair Good Excellent N/A
8. How would you rate your overall health? Excellent Very Good Fair Poor Bad

Please answer these questions about your **current** pharmacy:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Please check the most appropriate box					
I find the pharmacy conveniently located					
In the pharmacy I wasn't kept waiting long to be attended to					
I like the appearance of the pharmacy					
The pharmacist spent as much time as was necessary with me					
The pharmacist knew how to explain things to me in an understandable manner					
The pharmacist carefully listened to me					
The pharmacist answered all my questions and worries					
The pharmacist knew how to help me with expert advice					

What do you **LIKE** about the pharmacy you most often visit?

What do you **NOT LIKE** about the pharmacy you most often visit?

What would you change about the HealthPoint pharmacy?

What is the most important feature of a pharmacy in your opinion?

Would you recommend the HealthPoint pharmacy to your family or friends? Yes No

Thank You for participating!

Encuesta De Satisfacción Farmacia

Pone un círculo sobre su respuesta:

1. ¿Utiliza actualmente la farmacia de HealthPoint para surtir sus recetas? Sí No
2. Si no, ¿Alguna vez ha utilizado la farmacia de HealthPoint? Sí No
3. ¿Llena sus recetas en más que una farmacia? Sí No
4. ¿Con que frecuencia es necesaria utilizar la farmacia? Cada semana Cada dos semanas Cada mes
5. ¿Cuántos medicamentos se toma normalmente (número)? _____
6. ¿En la farmacia se utiliza normalmente, cuanto tiempo espera en total para recoger su receta?
Sin espera menos de 10 minutos 10-20 minutos 20 -30 minutos
30 minutos – 1 hora Más que una hora No recuerda
7. ¿Cuál es su satisfacción con la experiencia de espera? Malo Regular Bueno Excelente No Aplica
8. ¿Cómo clarificaría su salud en general? Excelente Muy Bueno Regular No es bueno Malo

Por favor contesta estas preguntas acerca su farmacia **actual**:

	Totalmente de acuerdo	De acuerdo	Ni de acuerdo o desacuerdo	De desacuerdo	Totalmente De desacuerdo
Marque la casilla más apropiada					
Me parece la farmacia es muy práctica situado					
En la farmacia no me quedé esperando mucho tiempo para ser atendido					
Me gusta la apariencia de la farmacia					
El farmacéutico paso todo el tiempo que era necesario conmigo					
El farmacéutico sabía cómo explicar las cosas a mí de una manera comprensible					
El farmacéutico escucho atentamente a mí					
El farmacéutico respondió a todas mis preguntas y preocupaciones					
El farmacéutico sabía como ayudarme con el asesoramiento de expertos					

¿Qué te **GUSTA** de la farmacia que visitan más a menudo?

¿Qué **NO** te **GUSTA** de la farmacia que visitan más a menudo?

¿Qué cambiarías de la farmacia HealthPoint?

¿En su opinión, cual es la característica más importante de una farmacia?

Recomendaría la farmacia HealthPoint a familiares o amigos? Sí No

¡Gracias por participar!