Effect of Pharmacy Referral on Connecting Caregivers with the Alzheimer’s Association in the Western New York Region

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Did you know?
Every 65 seconds, someone in the U.S. is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.1

Introduction
In the United States, an estimated 5.5 million people are affected by Alzheimer’s disease.2 As of 2018, New York State has the 3rd highest incidence of Alzheimer’s disease nationally.3 This condition not only affects the individual, but also creates an overwhelming burden for families and caregivers. The UB Student Chapter of ASCP developed a project to assist pharmacists in referring caregivers to services provided by the Alzheimer’s Association of WNY.

Methods
- This is a quasi-experimental, interrupted time-series study design.3,4
- Students obtained a list of registered pharmacies from the NY Board of Pharmacy.
- Distribution of the referrals kits was conducted by pharmacy students between September 2018 and July 2019.
- Exclusion Criteria: Non-dispensing pharmacies, pediatric pharmacies, and all closed operations pharmacies.
- An informational email with a link to an introductory video was sent to each participating pharmacy outlining the goal of this project, how to identify patients and caregivers who could benefit from services by the Alzheimer’s Association, and ways to provide referrals to patients.

Results
- How can pharmacists bridge the gap between caregivers of Alzheimer’s patients and the valuable resources available to them?

18.4 billion hours of care valued at $232 billion are provided by family and other unpaid caregivers.1

Discussion
What we did: Students distributed Alzheimer’s Association referral pads to local pharmacies. In total we were able to deliver to 162 of 315 eligible pharmacies. The majority of the pharmacies were located in Erie County, and approximately 75% of pharmacies were chain/retail stores.

Obstacles Along the Way:
- Most of distribution was within 2-3 months just prior to measurement of results
- The organization was limited by a budget
- Difficult to mobilize students in the beginning to deliver products to pharmacies
- Considered mail distribution - not feasible with budget

Many corporate pharmacies maintained policies preventing referral pads to local pharmacies. In total we were able to deliver referral pads to various pharmacies in 8 counties throughout WNY. Although we did not reach our goal, we understand the importance of this task and would like to share ways this process could be more successful.

Ways for this project to be improved:
1. Reach out to upper management of the chain pharmacies
2. Increase funding allowing us to mail referral pads
3. Expand the period of distribution
4. Reach out to upper management of the chain pharmacies

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Conclusion
Our initial goal was to link Alzheimer’s patients and caregivers to the Alzheimer’s Association through the use of referral pads delivered to various pharmacies in 8 counties throughout WNY. Although we did not reach our goal, we understand the importance of this task and would like to share ways this process could be more successful.

Ways for this project to be improved:
1. Reach out to other pharmacy schools for help
2. Increase funding allowing us to mail referral pads
3. Expand the period of distribution
4. Reach out to upper management of the chain pharmacies

Citations:
3. Chiang I-CA, Jhangiani RS, Price PC. Quasi-Experimental Research. Research Methods in Psychology. 4. Reach out to upper management of the chain pharmacies