Qualitative methods in pharmacy research

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Abstract: Over the past years, there has been an increase in the use of qualitative methods in health services research, including pharmacy research. Pharmacy practice researchers can use these methods to understand, explain, discover, and explore both patients’ and health care practitioners’ thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. Qualitative research can also be used for the “democratisation” of research methods through research that is inclusive, collaborative, and involves partnerships and co-production. There is a wide spectrum of qualitative research methods that might be used in pharmacy research. This Special Issue showcases five articles in different settings and countries with diverse participants that seek to develop, explore, describe, and identify. These articles provide further insights into important pharmacy questions with the ultimate goal of helping improve health and well-being.

Keywords: qualitative methods; pharmacy practice; research
cancer. These studies highlighted the importance of exploring patients’ views and identifying the potential barriers to community pharmacy-based interventions.

While the previous articles focused on a range of stakeholders, including patients and consumers, two other studies focused on health care practitioners. Wood et al. [5] explored the barriers and facilitators to the implementation of Chlamydia partner treatment in Western Australia from the providers’ perspective. This qualitative study involved interviews with health care professionals involved in standard therapy (general practitioners, nurse practitioners, and sexual health clinicians) and community pharmacists. The goal of this study was to inform an effective alternative pathway for partner treatment of Chlamydia. Croft et al. [6] used the “think-aloud method”, which is often used to investigate problem solving and commonly used in cognitive psychology research, to investigate pharmacists’ clinical reasoning and the decision-making process that is used when supplying prescribed medicines. This qualitative study described the pharmacist decision-making process and provided insights into the clinical reasoning process. Pharmacy educators can replicate this study to understand the gaps in knowledge and implement educational interventions to improve this process.

The articles in this Special Issue have illustrated that qualitative research offers unique opportunities for understanding complex phenomena such as marginalised communities’ medication-taking experiences. It also provides a better understanding of stakeholders’ experiences and a catalyst for further work. It can be used as part of a mixed methods project to provide insights and complement quantitative data. Last but not least, it encourages research that is concerned with ensuring that participants who experience marginalisation influence research, help identify what is important, and specify how the community might benefit from their involvement. We hope this Special Issue will motivate other researchers to use these methods to provide further insights into important pharmacy questions with the ultimate goal of helping improve health and well-being.

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References