



Community Pharmacy Scotland: The Minor Ailment Service as perceived and experienced by service users - a pilot study

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Aim: To date there has been no systematic assessment of value of the Minor Ailment Service (MAS), as perceived and experienced by service users at a national level. This pilot study was performed to gauge the feasibility of a full national project, test the planned logistics and data handling, and to obtain an expected response rate.

Methods: Five community pharmacies across Scotland were selected for the pilot study on the basis of mixed deprivation and locations. Each pharmacy was provided with 25 study packs containing an information sheet, pre-paid envelope and questionnaire.

Questionnaire development was informed by previous service evaluation projects and from national public health reports for the purposes of face and content validity.

Questionnaire items were designed to elicit:
(i) overall satisfaction, (ii) perceptions of service competency and (iii) experiences of the consultation.

Items have also been included to elicit the reasons for service users' choice for MAS/the community pharmacy and also to find out which/what other professional health care services would have otherwise been sought.

Results: Of the possible 125 questionnaires, a total of 52 were distributed in a 1 week period: 16 were returned and completed, giving a response rate of 31%.

Sixteen patients returned the questionnaire, all of whom had used the service before. The majority were female (n=11), were aged from 17 to 72 with eligibility categories including 'In full time education and under 19' (n= 6), 'Receiving a form of income support' (n=4) and 'Over 60' (n = 3).

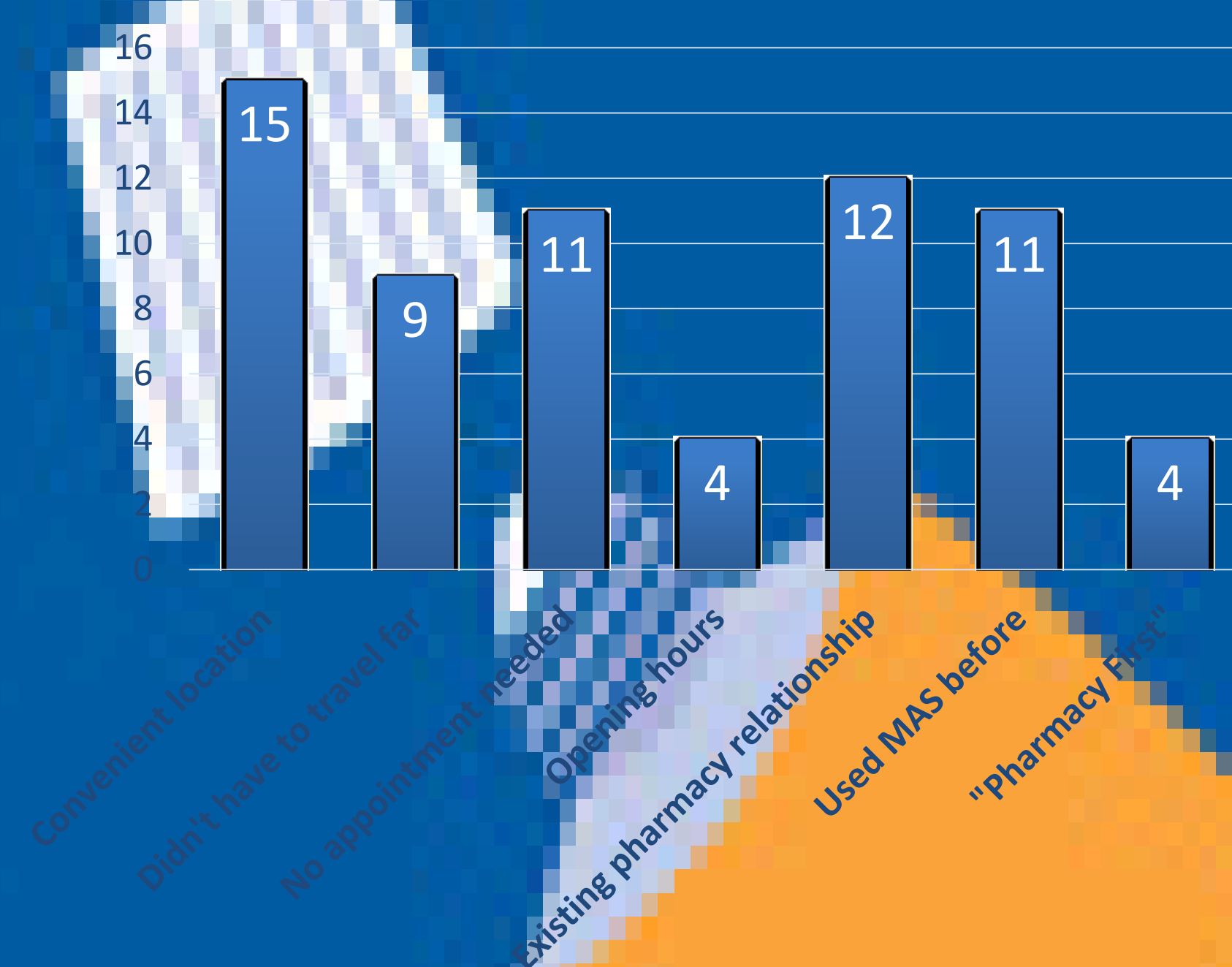
The pilot study responses informed questionnaire refinement with minor changes in layout and a reduction in open ended questions which were rarely completed.

The responses from the pilot questionnaires provide positive indications regarding MAS user experiences and perceptions, provide a promising return rate, and has successfully tested the logistical framework for the main project.

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Reasons for Using MAS



Outcome: The main project will distribute 10 'study packs' from every community pharmacy providing MAS in Scotland within a 2 week period. Given the number distributed in the one week pilot, this should be achievable.

The results will provide evidence on a national level of patients' experience of MAS, allow quantification of the transfer of care to community pharmacy from other healthcare services and service users' perceptions of effectiveness.