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# Pharmacists' training, experiences and behaviours in managing homeless patients

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Community pharmacists, due to their diverse and direct patient/public facing role in diverse settings are well situated to offer proactive and opportunistic support and advice to people who may be homeless.

The aim of this study was to determine pharmacists' training, experiences and behaviours in managing homeless patients.

Research ethics approvals were obtained from Robert Gordon University; Health Research Authority (England); and NHS Research and Development (Scotland).



A mailed survey of responsible pharmacists from Scotland, England and Wales

Over a third (38.1%) manage homeless patients at least once a month



322/1951 responded, RR 16.5%

Only about 4% had guideline to manage homeless patients in a pharmacy



Near a quarter (23.8%) ever asked a homeless patient if they have a place to go next for food and shelter  
'Never crossed my mind' 28 yr old, male community pharmacist  
'It is too intrusive' 58 yr old, male pharmacy manager

Very few (13.1%) agreed that it was in their remit to discuss homelessness

Only 5.5% had the topic of homelessness covered in undergraduate training



'New homeless patient to the area, helped register them with surgery (a general practice)'  
25 yr old, male community pharmacist

Just over a third (32.2%) knew where to refer a homeless patient for social support in their area

'I sign posted a patient to housing services at the local council. The patient was further referred to a housing association who added him to their waiting list. I also advised him to have discussions with his partner to try and repair their relationship. This worked and patient is no longer homeless.'  
59 yr old, female community pharmacist

## CONCLUSIONS

A lack of appropriate training opportunities exist for pharmacists at the University and continuous professional development level in managing homeless patients. There is a need to develop a guideline in enabling community pharmacists to support homeless patients around medicines management and signposting to social services.

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