Promoting sexual health among women on opioid treatment in community pharmacy: A qualitative study
Aims

Aim 1. Determine the acceptability of promoting sexual health within community pharmacies in England.

Aim 2. Identify initial ideas to develop a pharmacy-based sexual health service to promote sexual health among WRO in community pharmacies.

Background & Aims

Aim 1. Determine the acceptability of promoting sexual health within community pharmacies in England.

Aim 2. Identify initial ideas to develop a pharmacy-based sexual health service to promote sexual health among WRO in community pharmacies.

Women on opioid substitution treatment (WRO) are amongst risk populations for STIs and BBVs.
Methods

Recruitment – areas of Bath, Midsomer Norton and Bristol (England, UK)

• 14 CPs (female n=7; male n=7) [between 30min-1h30min]
• 20 WRO [between 25min-1h20min]

Data collection settings

• WRO: opportunistic at drug services and a service for sex workers
• CPs: contact superintendent pharmacists, mail study packs, emails and phone calls to pharmacists in the area

Ethical approval – NHS Ethical: IRAS ID 20570, REC 16/NW/0432

• CPs: University, community pharmacy, cafe
• WRO: drug services, service for sex workers

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews
Methods

Recorded & transcribed verbatim

Framework Analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 2003)

- Development of a hierarchical thematic framework
- Case & theme-based approach
- Flexible and dynamic approach
- Bottom-up analysis (no theoretical/epistemological approach)

But...

It is complex & highly time-consuming!
**Results**

Overall, good acceptability from both WRO and CPs, although there are some barriers to overcome.

**Main ideas for service (WRO)**
- Provide information
- Include reproductive health services
- Pharmacist or technician should deliver the service
- Structured (protocol)
- Free condoms
- Health review/assessment (questionnaire/MUR?)
- Work with other professionals (signpost)
- Including pharmacy staff
- Phone/website service (anonymity)

**Main ideas for service (CP)**
- Give women options and support (do not single women out)
- Condom supply
- Posters and leaflets
- Screening services
- Consultation to educate/give info

**Main barriers/challenges WRO**
- Feeling judged/stigmatised by pharmacist
- Negative rapport/experiences with pharmacists or other pharmacy clients
- Locum pharmacists/changing pharmacists
- Need to be commission/remuneration
- Time constraints
- Workload
- Not comfortable speaking to a male pharmacist
- The pharmacy is not private enough
- Embarrassment/Taboo & sensitive topics
- Locum pharmacists
- Male pharmacists/female clients
- Time constraints
- Busy and not approachable pharmacists
- Feeling unwell because of drug use/treatment
- Some people are difficult to reach out (e.g., homeless)
- Difficulties starting "the conversation" (sensitive topic)

**Main barriers/challenges CPs**
- Need for well-trained staff
- Not confident in knowing STI/BBV status
- Not comfortable starting the conversation
- More comfortable with other professionals (e.g., drug workers)
- Clients might think the service is not beneficial to them
- Pharmacy is a business
- Feeling scared of knowing clients’ STI/BBV status

**Status (Commission/Reimbursement)**
- Not eligible (still a pharmacy)
- Need to be a female pharmacist
- Not reimbursable
- Not reimbursable (Contraceptives)
- Not reimbursable (Sexual Health Services)
- Not reimbursable (Contraceptives)

**Recommendations**
- Provide more information
- Ensure privacy
- Include reproductive health services
- Structured (protocol)
- Free condoms
- Health review/assessment (questionnaire/MUR?)
- Work with other professionals (signpost)
- Phone/website service (anonymity)
Conclusions

- Key role of community pharmacists in promoting sexual health among women on opioid treatment
- Support for the development of the first pharmacy-based sexual health service for women on opioid treatment in England
- Take into account & address potential barriers
- This study will inform the development of a service to promote the sexual health and well-being of women on opioid treatment
- Key role of community pharmacists in promoting sexual health among women on opioid treatment
Acknowledgments

Thank you for listening!

Also to all my lovely participants & to my supervisors 😊
ANY QUESTIONS?