

Drug Sample Dispensing and Management in the Practice-based McGill Primary Health Care Research Network

Roland Grad, Edith Omon, Silvia Duong, Alain Boulet, Ellen Rosenberg, Vera Granikov, Vinita D'Souza, Garud Iyengar, Guillaume Bessière, Julie Henrie, Isabelle Hebert, Gwenaelle Bidet, Marie-Thérèse Lussier, Layla Younes and Pierre Pluye

IMPORTANCE

- The dispensing of drug samples can pose a risk of harm for patient health, influence prescribing behaviour, and increase costs of care by promoting patented medicines.
- Little is known about drug sample dispensing, or how drug samples are managed in community-based primary health care (hereafter primary care).

OBJECTIVE

- To describe drug sample dispensing practices and their management in the academic Family Medicine Units (FMUs) of McGill University.

METHODS

- **STUDY DESIGN:** Descriptive cross-sectional survey
- **SETTING:** All FMUs of the McGill Primary Health Care Research Network
- **PARTICIPANTS:** Primary care practitioners (family physicians, residents, pharmacists and nurses) who dispense or manage drug samples at 6 McGill FMUs
- **DATA COLLECTION:** 3 survey instruments developed by the Primary Care Research Network of the University of Montreal
 - 26-question self-administered questionnaire for drug sample managers
 - 30-question self-administered questionnaire for practitioners
 - Inventory of products found in drug sample cabinets
- **DATA ANALYSIS:** Descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

- **PARTICIPATION:** 104 health professionals at 5 FMUs with a drug sample cabinet completed the practitioner questionnaire

Figure 1: Distribution of participants at FMUs with drug sample cabinets

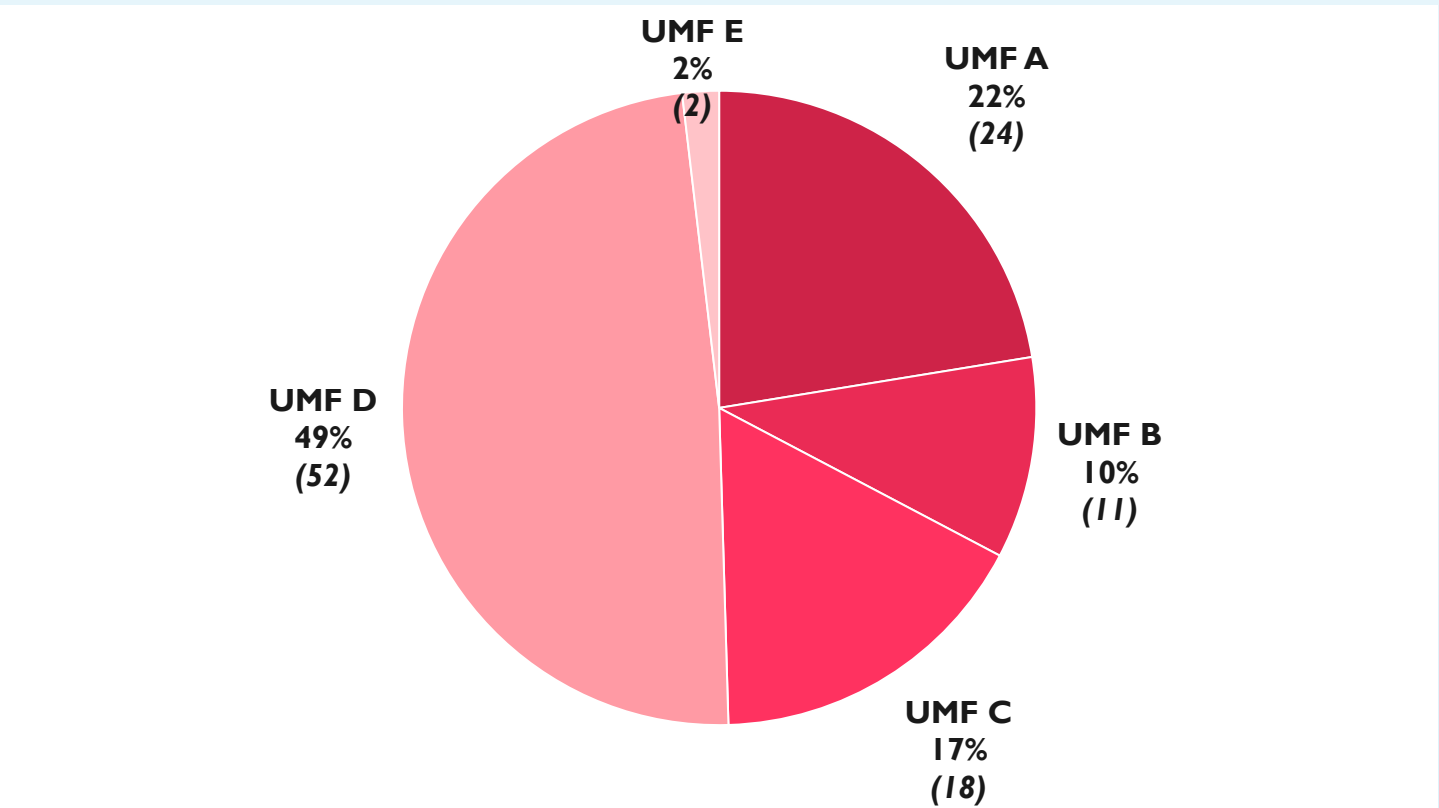


Figure 2: Response rate by FMU

FMU	Participants	Questionnaires distributed* (n)	Questionnaires collected (n)	Response rate (%)
A	24	24	23	96
B	44	26	12	27
C	47	35	19	40
D	102	102	53	52
E	12	3	3	25
F	0	1	n/a	n/a
Total	231	193	110	48

*By mistake, not all participants received the questionnaire

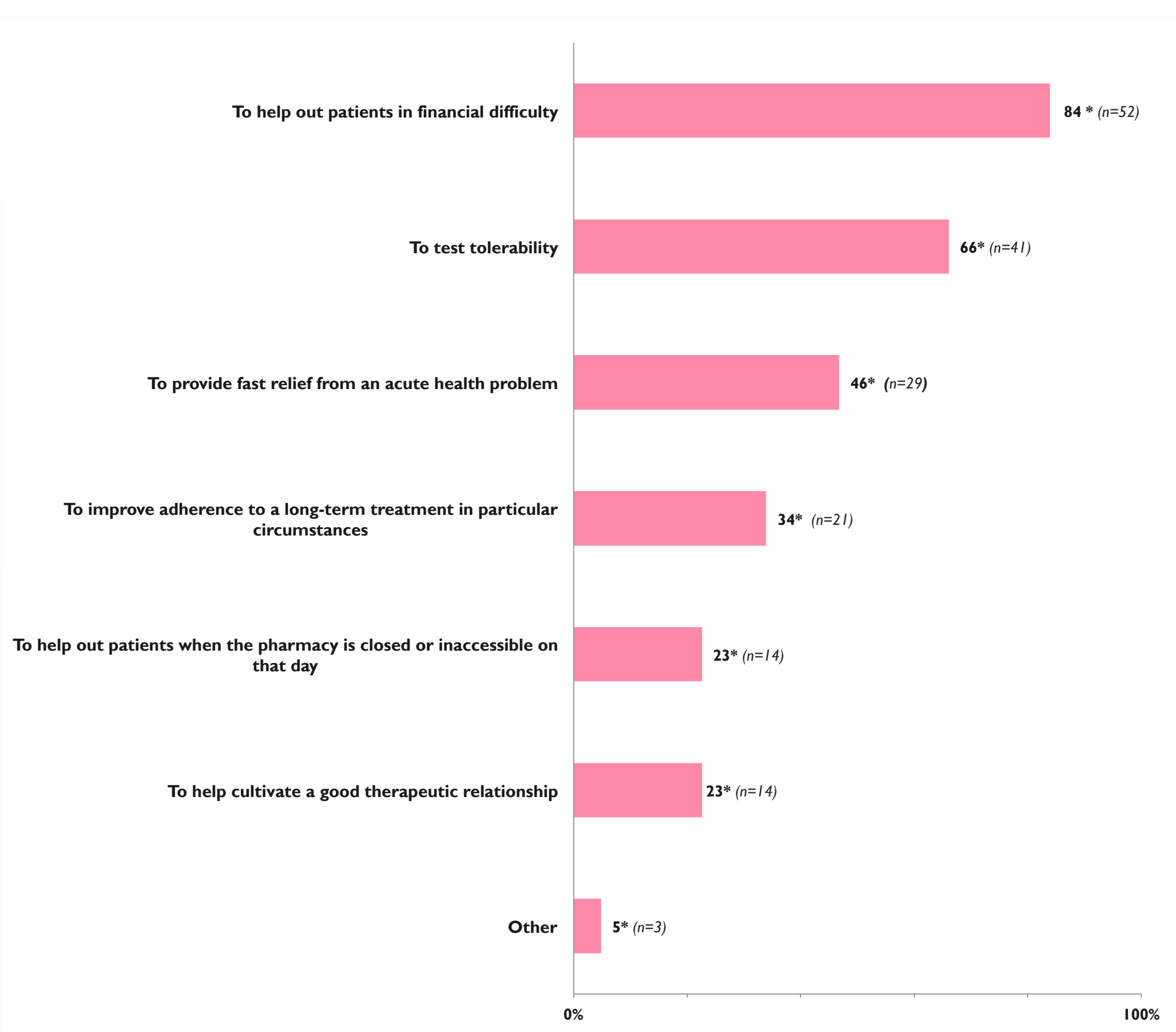
DRUG SAMPLE MANAGEMENT

- Of the 6 McGill FMUs, one unit (St Mary's) had a policy of keeping NO drug samples; 5 FMUs had a common storage space for drug samples

DISPENSING BEHAVIOUR IN THE PRIOR SIX MONTHS

- 62 (60%) dispensed drug samples
- 43 (69%) took samples for personal use
- 25 (40%) distributed samples at least once a month
- 24 (39%) provided samples to patients even when the sample was not their first choice
- 22 (36%) did not always write a note in the patient's file about the dispensing
- Antibiotics and antipsychotics were not provided to patients

Figure 3: What are your primary reasons for distributing drug samples to patients?



* There were 62 drug sample dispensers. Participants could choose more than one reason for dispensing drug samples

Figure 4: Within the last 6 months, what classes of medications, in sample format, have you distributed to a patient at least once? Among the drug samples listed below, which would be useful to find in the communal sample cabinet, shared by the professionals at your FMU?

Drug Sample Class	Dispensed at least once (%)*	Useful to have (%)*
Analgesics	66	87
Oral contraceptives	50	85
Vitamins	41	51
Antacids	30	67
Antidepressants	25	64
Erectile Dysfunction	17	33
Antihypertensive	17	53
Anti-diabetic	12	37
Anti-migraine	12	37
Antihistamine	11	56
Smoking cessation	11	61
Laxatives	9	41
Lipid lowering	4	41
Antibiotics	0	38
Antipsychotics	0	24

* There were 62 drug sample dispensers. Participants could choose more than one drug class

KNOWLEDGE OF DRUG SAMPLE MANAGEMENT POLICIES AMONG PRACTITIONERS WHO DISPENSE DRUG SAMPLES

- 48 (77%) did not know whether a written policy on drug samples existed at their CSSS
- 32 (52%) did not know whether a written policy on drug samples existed in their FMU
- 74 (71%) were in favour of implementing a written policy on drug samples

DISCUSSION

- Most FMU practitioners do not know how drug samples are managed, or whether a local policy exists about their dispensing
- Given our response rate (48%) we cannot be confident in generalizing our findings
- We do not know if the dispensing behavior of participants is representative of all practitioners

CONCLUSION

- About two out of three participants in McGill FMUs are in favour of implementing a written policy on drug sample dispensing and management
- As one site of a provincial survey, these results will be discussed with the 'College des Médecins du Québec' and thus inform policy development

