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Abstract Body

This mixed-methods study explored the views of community pharmacists and their consumers towards giving and receiving breast and bowel cancer screening information in the pharmacy setting. Community pharmacies are recognised as a potentially-effective setting for health promotion because they are perceived as trusted, convenient and accessible; they therefore have the capacity to engage people, including disengaged and vulnerable populations who do not regularly visit general practitioners, and have lower rates of participation in cancer screening. However, there is little existing evidence about the feasibility of pharmacies in cancer screening.

This study involved: (1) an electronic survey completed by 27 pharmacists, and (2) in-depth semi-structured interviews with 5 pharmacists and 3 consumer representatives, in the Metro South Health catchment of Brisbane. Both pharmacists and consumers feel positively about the community pharmacy as a setting for breast and bowel cancer screening; however, there are a number of complex barriers to be addressed if this is to be implemented successfully.

Pharmacists perceive they have a role in health promotion, but feel they do not promote this role well. They identify a lack of knowledge necessary to discuss screening with their customers, and acknowledge that training will be required. They also identify issues with lack of funding, and identify financial incentives as important. Pharmacists consider lack of time, low literacy levels of consumers and other logistical issues could also create barriers to offering a cancer screening program in the pharmacy setting. Consumers do not currently perceive pharmacies as a setting for receiving cancer screening information, but are open to this idea. They highlight the importance of pharmacists being knowledgeable, approachable and protecting their confidentiality. They see pharmacists having a role in linking and referring people to other health services and filling a need in the community when the GP is too busy.