

## **Community Pharmacists' Knowledge and Comfort with Oncology Care**

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### **Abstract**

#### **Purpose**

For many people with cancer, a local pharmacy is often their most frequent point of contact with the healthcare system. This puts community pharmacists in a key position to support these patients with their therapies. With more oral anticancer therapies used in outpatient settings, community pharmacists are well positioned to answer patients' questions, identify drug interactions, and counsel on the side effects and safety of medications, and encourage patients to adhere to their treatments. However, past studies have shown gaps in community pharmacists' oncology knowledge and confidence. The goal of this project was to assess the current knowledge, comfort levels, and continuing education (CE) needs of these pharmacists and compare findings with a 2016 survey. Results were evaluated for changes since 2016 and to identify CE needs to support community pharmacists.

#### **Methods**

A survey to measure the community pharmacists' knowledge about oncology, counseling confidence, and CE preferences was created. Questions were adapted from the 2016 survey and expanded to capture current practice, time spent counseling patients, barriers to providing care, counseling on prevention and screening, and CE preferences. The 20-question Qualtrics survey was distributed through the Illinois Pharmacy Association (IPhA) and took about 10 minutes to complete. Eligible participants included licensed pharmacists with a B.S. in Pharmacy or PharmD who were actively employed in the community setting, while students, technicians, and non-practicing pharmacists were excluded. Data collection was completed in Fall 2025, and results were analyzed and compared with the 2016 findings. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE), and participation was voluntary.

#### **Results**

A total of 53 pharmacists completed the survey. Respondents reported varying comfort levels with oncology care; most were confident with medication safety and dispensing processes, while lower confidence was reported in clinical counseling, including managing side effects.

The most common barriers to counseling included a lack of oncology-specific knowledge, limited time, and restricted access to patient information. Most pharmacists relied on web-based clinical

resources and internal pharmacy tools, with few directly contacting oncology providers. The majority expressed interest in additional oncology-focused CE.

### **Conclusion**

Community pharmacists play a critical role in supporting patients on oral anticancer therapies, yet gaps in clinical knowledge and confidence remain. Addressing these gaps through targeted continuing education and improved collaboration with oncology providers may enhance pharmacists' ability to provide effective counseling and optimize patient care.

This research provides an updated understanding of how community pharmacists' knowledge and comfort with oncology care have changed since 2016 and highlights CE areas that can support these pharmacists in providing excellent care to oncology patients.