

The Danish Pharmacies in the frontline battling COVID-19

The emergency response, contribution, challenges, and lessons learnt during the pandemic.

The study presents how the pharmacies have handled the COVID-19 pandemic, and encourages leaders to involve an area of action in order to support their employees effectively during such an extraordinary circumstance.

BACKGROUND

While the pandemic raged, pharmacies have been open for both providing medicine and advice to citizens in a safe and secure environment.

The pharmacies have had to decide on measures, the authorities' announcements, and requirements that have changed on a daily basis. Several employees have had to ignore their concerns and get straight to work.

This essential role has been an eye-opener for the pharmacy's as a central part of the primary health care system and the changing actions and restrictions on the part of the authorities put us in a dilemma.



AIMES

With this idea catalogue, we will point out the good and less good experiences that our colleagues have had during the pandemic, with the aim of using these experiences as inspiration for the current as well as any future pandemics or health crises. It might lead to adaptable pharmacies and also strengthen the management's crisis management, for the sake of the pharmacy, society and the employees.

METHOD

The study is based on qualitative research. An online interview-based survey with 12 pharmacies was conducted. Inclusion criteria a pharmacy from every region and different sizes to represent differences in activities and challenges.

Initial online interviews provided answers that inspired new areas of inquiry which resulted in two different electronic surveys. Both interviews and surveys were posted in a restricted Facebook group with more than 3,000 pharmaconomist members.

Interviews and surveys were anonymous to ensure near-full disclosure. Answers were presented and discussed with Farmakonomforeningen and PharmaDanmark. A key-person from the association of Danish Pharmacies was also interviewed.

RESULTS

The mass of information and restrictions coming from The Danish Medicines Agency, especially at the beginning of the pandemic, gave challenges with communication in pharmacies meaning not all staff felt well informed, which caused concern.

Almost every pharmacy stakeholder forgot to think about employee well-being. It was found that the employees had a high level of dissatisfaction with appropriate recognition of their contribution as frontline workers during the pandemic.

Some pharmacy stakeholders rewarded the staff with salary supplements for working during the first months of the pandemic. The results also showed that some pharmacies were good at preventing infection with covid-19, whereas some Pharmacies chose to save on protective equipment so that the staff had to reuse the same mask, for example.

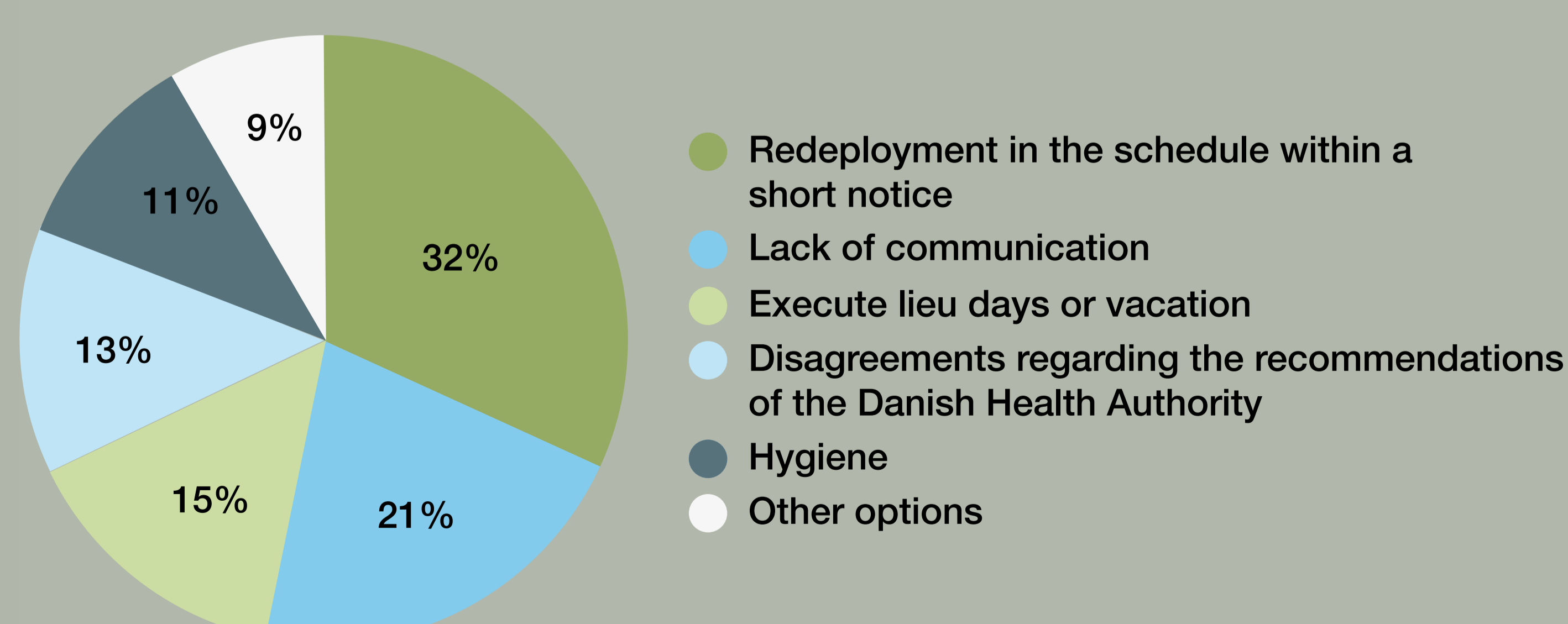


Figure 1: The most prominent challenge

CONCLUSION

Battling pandemics demand high level of internal and external communication in Pharmacies. Lack of communication created challenges and should be worked on for improvement. The Danish Pharmacies need to collaborate during a crisis and must focus on the well-being of employees if pharmacies are to continue at the frontline battling pandemics. Based on our results a common contingency plan for the Danish pharmacies could be very useful and help in the future to respond effectively to a pandemic such as Covid-19.

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QUOTATIONS/RESULTS

The government, the authorities, The Association of Danish Pharmacies, and you out at the pharmacies built the ship while it sailed. No one knew how it would end.

We have been confirmed that we are a part of the health sector, and the society seeks information via the Pharmacies more than before.

The pharmacy doesn't want to invest in plexiglass. The employees have been unsafe about the situation.

We make sure to sanitize the health insurance card when vaccinating. We encourage the customer to sanitize their hands after touching cash in order to give the customers good habits.

There have been ups and downs, as we are all different human beings. It was tough to be at work. It was unsafe.

But we have not spoken about how we feel or how it feels to go to work. More specifically, the word "uncertainty." We talk a lot about all the practical stuff and all the protective equipment that has been doing great. But not how we actually feel.

RECOMENDATIONS

- ✳ The management should acknowledge the effort of the employees during the pandemic and offer security. This will create job satisfaction and therefore increase the employees' motivation.
- ✳ The pharmacies should adapt the taking of holidays and days in lieu to the individual co-worker's need and should give employees as early notification as possible.
- ✳ It is important that the leadership is visible and takes the lead as it influences how the pharmacy staff will handle a crisis. Leadership should listen to employees' suggestions, wishes, and concerns.
- ✳ An APV (Workplace risk assessment) and MUS interviews (PDD - people development dialogue) should be carried out during a crisis.
- ✳ Clear communication must be created for the employees. The pharmacy should choose the form of communication that can reach the entire pharmacy staff.
- ✳ The pharmacy can point out two information managers for the distribution of the information to all departments, both externally and internally.
- ✳ It is recommended not to hang too many signs up, as it can become confusing for customers.
- ✳ It's recommended that the selected information managers reach out to customers and the community via social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.
- ✳ Correspondingly, those responsible for information should attend relevant courses for handling external and internal communication.
- ✳ It is recommended that a contingency plan be prepared based on the COVID-19 experiences, which may be used in future pandemics/crises.

