

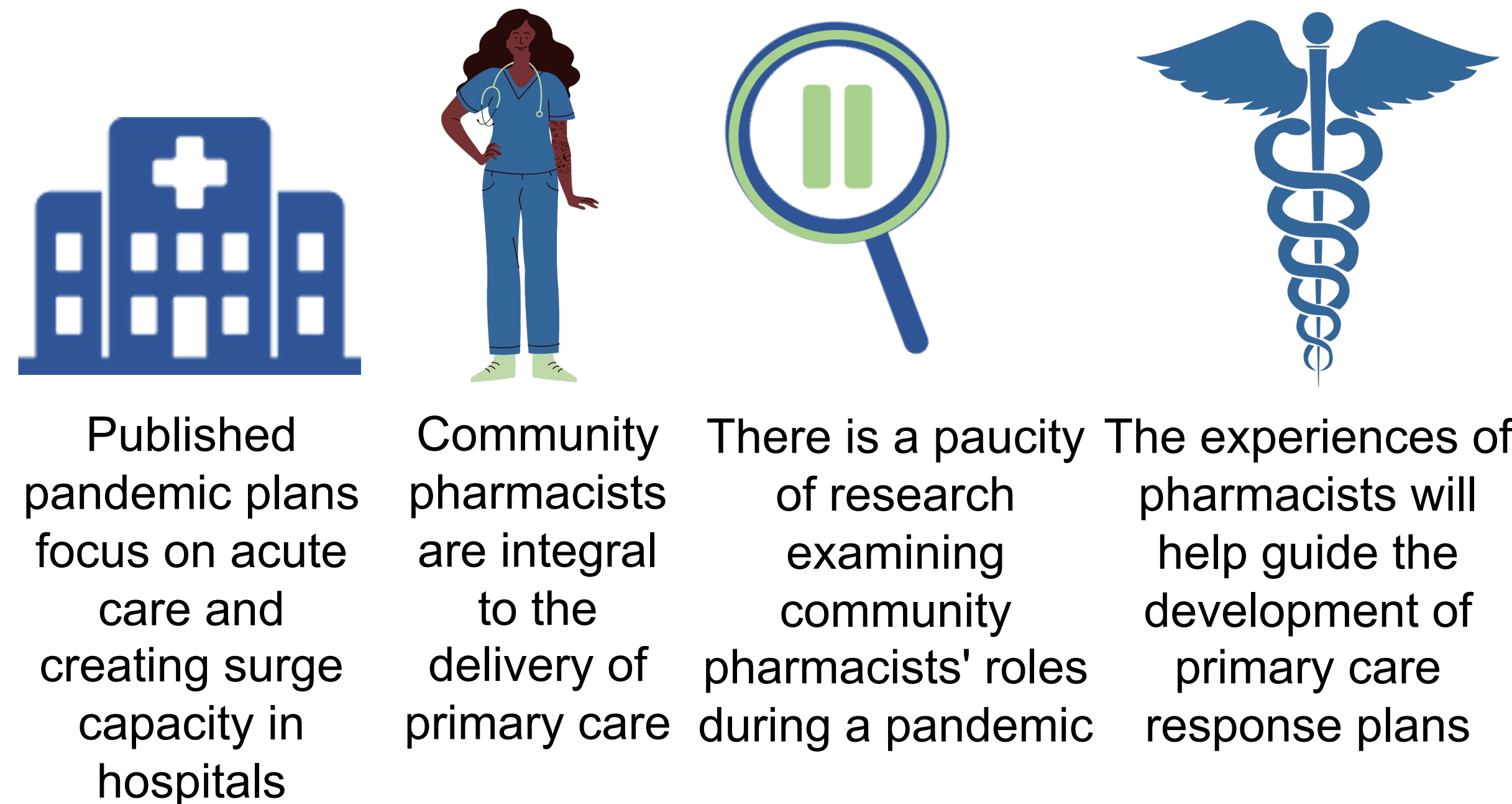
Pandemic Preparedness Planning: Exploring Community Pharmacists' Roles during the Closure Stage of COVID-19 in Newfoundland and Labrador

Sylvia Farooq¹, Jennifer Donnan¹, Maria Mathews², Julia Lukewich³, Tiffany Lee¹

¹Memorial University School of Pharmacy; ²Western University Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry; ³Memorial University Faculty of Nursing



Background



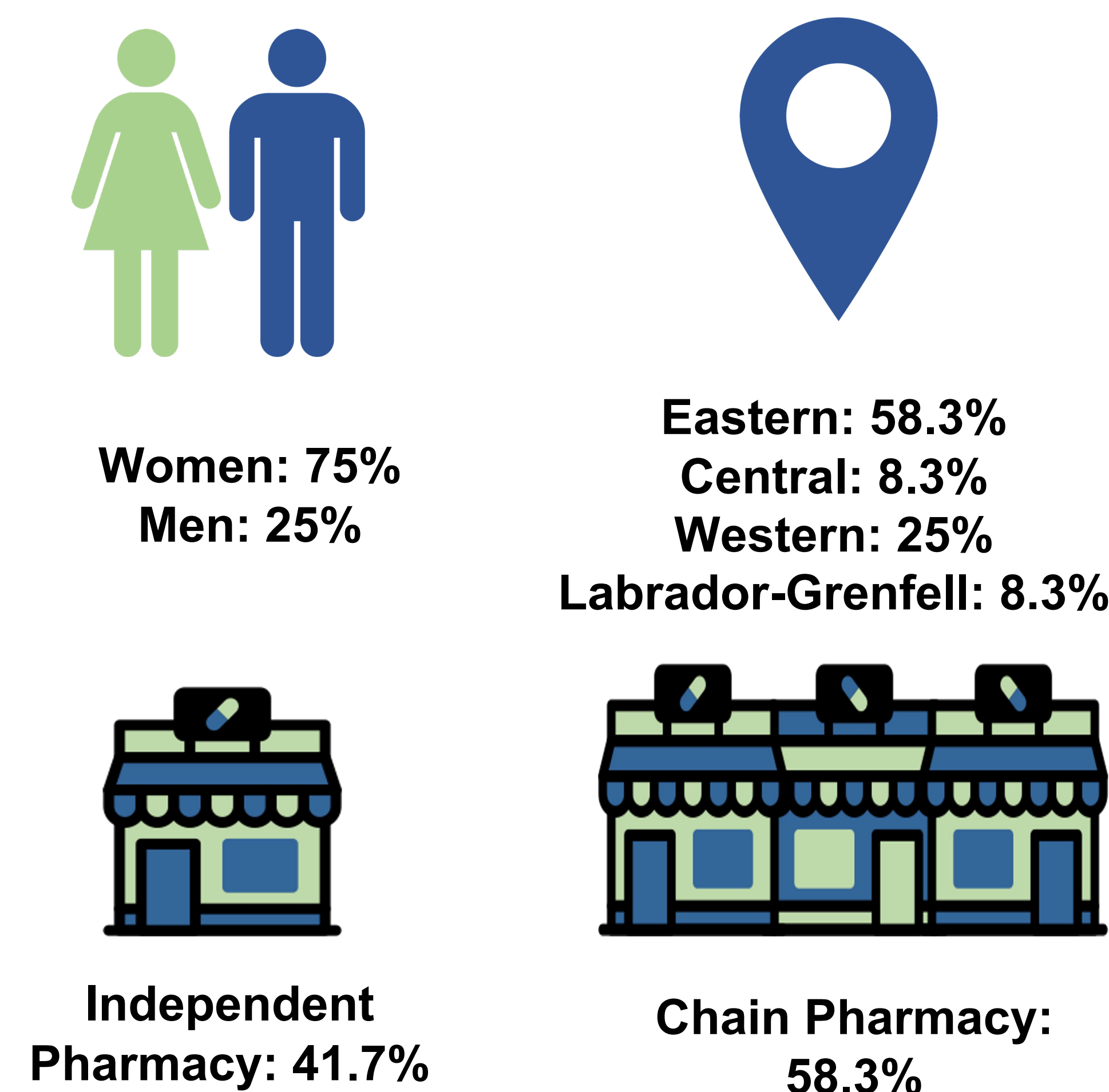
Objectives

- To describe community pharmacists' roles during the pandemic and the facilitators and barriers they faced in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Methods

- Semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 community pharmacists were completed as part of a case study.
- Interviews were completed virtually over 1-2 hours and transcribed verbatim.
- Transcripts were coded inductively and themes were developed using applied thematic analysis (Nowell, 2017).
- Findings specific to the closure stage of the pandemic (March – Mid May 2020) are presented.

Figure 1: Participant Characteristics (n = 12)



Results

Figure 2: Themes and Illustrative Quotes Given by Pharmacists

Pharmacists' Leadership in Continuity of Care	"So, the hospital wouldn't take any patients, they wouldn't see any patients. And if the patient needed refills, it got sent to me to figure out "	"I would take a picture of his arm or whatever was happening [...] and text it to their family doctor. "
Pharmacists as Medication Stewards	"We prepared everybody's medications at all times for an additional two-weeks , in the event that the pharmacy closed."	"We were definitely the villains as pharmacists for [30 day supply] at that time"
Pharmacists as a Source of COVID-19 Health Information	"At that point there was no treatment options or recommended recommendations on what to give. So [we suggested medications] if there was something that we could give them over the counter to treat symptoms "	"I'm an independent pharmacy, so I don't have anybody relaying information down to me. [...] So just day by day, [I proceeded with] trying to figure it out and then try to communicate [it] to everybody"
Personal Toll of COVID-19 on Pharmacists' Mental Health and Well-Being	"I felt like I was a support for everyone else, which was an additional level of burnout for me. "	"A simple word to describe it was, you know, working hell [...] You know, so you're half afraid to go to work then half afraid to come home to your family at times"

Table 1: Facilitators and Barriers Associated With Pharmacist Roles

Theme	Roles	Communication from Government Bodies	Barriers	Facilitators
Pharmacists' Leadership in Continuity of Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Prescribing (common ailments, prescription extensions)Managing chronic conditionsCoordinating careDelivering medications and supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Government expanded funding to include virtual or telephone medication reviewsGovernment expanded funding to include a delivery fee for Opioid Agonist Maintenance Treatment (OAMT)Health Canada provided requirements regarding the delivery of OAMT regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial supportInadequate staffingLack of access to personal protective equipmentLack of access to delivery serviceUnclear guidance on scope of practiceLimited scope of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pharmacist prescribing regulationsAccess to delivery servicesSupport from other health care workersSupport from organizationSwift regulatory changes (Witness dosing of OAMT)Financial support for virtual care
Pharmacists as Medication Stewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Protecting the drug supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Regulator advised pharmacists to enact 30-day medication supply limitsGovernment communication regarding the 30-day medication supply limits was not consistent with the messaging of the regulator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communication with the governmentMisrepresentation from the media	
Pharmacists as a Source of COVID-19 Health Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Responding to drug information requestsEducating patients on symptoms associated with COVID-19Providing advice on supportive measures to reduce COVID-19 symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The regulator reminded pharmacists in their role in reporting communicable diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Access to evidence-based information regarding COVID-19Low confidenceLack of coordination between public health and pharmacies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Support from Pharmacist Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL)

Limitations

- Data may predominantly reflect select regions of NL.
- Interviews took place during different stages of the pandemic, which may have influenced the reflections provided by pharmacists.

Conclusions



- Community pharmacists played a critical role in ensuring care during the closure stage of the pandemic.
- COVID-19 related changes to pharmacist scope of practice (e.g., CDSA exemption) supported continuity of care.
- Future pandemic plans should aim to offer more robust communication strategies, mental health support, and access to personal protective equipment.

Acknowledgments

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References

Nowell, L., Norris, J., White, D., & Moules, N. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>

Contact: Sylvia Farooq
email: sf7730@mun.ca