

# Strengthening medication safety in Danish municipalities – a mapping of challenges

A study mapping the challenges of medicine-related tasks in Danish municipalities. The results will contribute to the discussion of how pharmacy technicians from community pharmacies can support strengthening of medication safety in the municipalities in cooperation with municipal employees.

Contact information:  
Rikke Nørgaard Hansen, [rn@pharmakon.dk](mailto:rn@pharmakon.dk)

## Background

The Danish Patient Safety Authority has reported an increase in the number of registered unintentional accidents from 2017 to 2019. This increase is especially observed in municipal institutions such as nursing homes, home care and residential facilities for adults and children with physical and mental disabilities, where 66 % of the registered accidents are due to medicine management.

Until now no studies have identified which challenges with medicine-related tasks are experienced in the municipalities.

## Purpose

The aim of the study is to map the challenges of medicine-related tasks in municipal institutions identified by municipal managers and to identify, how pharmacy technicians from community pharmacies can support the strengthening of medication safety in the municipalities.

## Methods

To understand experience with medicine-related tasks, semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews with two-three municipal managers in ten different municipalities were conducted. The interviews were held online, recorded and transcribed verbatim before conducting a content analysis using NVivo version 2020.



Figure 1: Researchers conducting an online interview with one of the municipal managers

## Results

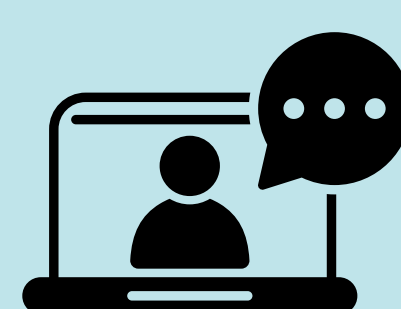
Twenty-seven municipality managers were interviewed, and the identified challenges are shown in figure 2.

### The care-requiring and complex patient

"We hardly have any patients who do not take some form of medicine anymore, and we no longer have patients who only take two or three types of medicine, we actually have patients who take – yes – 20-30 different types of medicine. And we [as municipal employees working with patients] must know about the symptoms and quite a lot about the medicine they take. And we are seeing it more and more often over the last 10-20 years. I think we did not have this type of complex patients years ago." (Interview 9)

### Medicine during transitions

"We have challenges when it comes to patients in municipal rehabilitation, you know, where the patients are discharged from hospital, they are often very sick. And it is challenging to get an overview of their medication, because hospitals discharge the patients too early without patients having their medication reviewed properly. So the nurses in the rehabilitation team spend a huge amount of time getting in touch with the general practitioner, and the general practitioner thinks it is the hospital that should give the overview, and when we are in touch with the hospital, the hospital says that the patient has been discharged and that it is not their job." (Interview 1)



## Challenges in medicine-related tasks in municipalities

### Medicine-related issues in disease-preventing and health-promoting activities at municipal health centres

"I also know that the learning curve can be long and steep for some [patients], but then I must admit that I think that there must be a follow-up in general practice on such things [taking medication]. I do not always think that the general practitioner makes sure that the patient knows what to do with the medicine, because he/she thinks 'how difficult can it be when I have explained it once?' Well, they should make sure that it is understood." (Interview 27)

### Observation of effects and side effects of medicine in patients

"We are in shortage of employees with a health-related education. So some of the practical tasks [for example in home care] will be solved by unskilled staff, and they lack competencies in observing effect and side-effects of medication. They must not act upon health-related issues, but they should at least be able to go to a colleague with a health-related education and say, I have observed this and that, I think you should be aware of it." (Interview 3)

### Lack of and non-compliance with existing procedures and instructions related to medication handling

"But we know that procedures, they do not save the world, because you also have to have time to learn and understand the procedures, and it has to make sense for you and your knowledge about medication, and for some employees, the knowledge about medication can be uncertain." (Interview 9)

## Conclusion

This study identified five challenges in medicine-related tasks as they are experienced or viewed by municipal managers (figure 2).



## Next steps

The next step of the study is to explore the employees' experiences with the identified challenges. In the last step of the study, the results will be presented at a workshop to a panel consisting of municipal managers, a pharmacy technician working in a municipality, a pharmacy owner and representatives from The Danish Association of Pharmaconomists and The Association of Danish Pharmacies. The workshop will take an Appreciative Inquiry approach and will generate ideas on how pharmacy technicians from community pharmacies can contribute to support the strengthening of medication safety in municipalities.