

Pharmacists' communication skills are associated with physician prescription changes, study suggests

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Effective communication among health care professionals is essential for ensuring safe medical care. Assertiveness, the ability to express oneself candidly while respecting others, is seen as a crucial factor for improving medical safety.

Community pharmacists provide drugs to patients based on prescriptions issued by physicians. These pharmacists scrutinize the suitability of prescriptions considering patient interviews, records, and laboratory data. If any safety concerns arise, they will contact the prescribed physician. Upon receiving such communication, the [physician](#) may revise the prescription if needed.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that a [pharmacist](#)'s assertiveness determines the frequency of contacts with physicians, and resulting prescription changes improve the safety of drug therapy. However, this relationship still requires further investigation.

In a University of Tsukuba study, a rating scale was used to measure the assertiveness of pharmacists and its relationship with the frequency of prescription changes resulting from interactions with physicians in the past month. The assertiveness rating scale is divided into three components: nonassertive self-expression that prioritizes others over self, aggressive self-expression that imposes personal opinions on others, and assertive self-expression that avoids both extremes and promotes mutual understanding. The work is published in the journal *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*.

The survey findings indicate that pharmacists with higher scores in assertive self-expression were more likely to initiate communication that led to physicians altering their prescriptions.

Being a learnable [communication](#) skill, assertiveness could be improved through targeted education. Future research should explore whether providing assertiveness training for pharmacists can foster better interactions with physicians and increase the safety of drug treatments.

More information: Mitsuaki Ishii et al, Relationship between assertiveness in community pharmacists and pharmacist-initiated

prescription changes, *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.sapharm.2023.06.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2023.06.006)

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