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A conceptual framework for the implementation of pharmacy practice research in the education of students at the K.U.Leuven, Belgium

Type of Abstract: Practice development

Aim of Project: In consequence of the Bologna declaration of 1999 and the following reform of the Flemish system of higher education, a master thesis will be one of the requirements to obtain the degree of Master in Pharmaceutical Care from 2007-2008 onwards. The aim of this project was to develop a conceptual framework for a master thesis in pharmaceutical care, along with the design of an adapted curriculum.

Method: On the basis of a review of recent literature and an analysis of study programmes of different European faculties of pharmaceutical sciences, a core group of staff members formulated objectives for the Master in Pharmaceutical Care. These objectives, considering knowledge as well as attitudes and practices, were discussed in focus groups with community pharmacists, hospital pharmacists and students. The resulting competency profiles were approved by the faculty council and faculty members agreed upon the particular competencies that should be attained in the different courses. For the master thesis, a concept was worked out that integrates different aspects of the existing study programme and that gives students the opportunity to develop research skills. The major parts are 1) literature review; 2) project work; 3) pharmacy practice research and 4) writing up the findings.

Results: The master thesis will be organised for groups of 6 students, working on a central theme. Every division of the faculty will supervise one group of students, hence stimulating the integration of fundamental research and pharmacy practice. Making an individual review of the literature, addressing one particular issue of the theme, will prepare students for discussions and help them to develop research questions. Project work will bring them in contact with a professional organisation or a pharmaceutical company. The pharmacy practice research project will be conducted along with the internship in a community pharmacy. We strongly believe that this will convince both students and supervisors of the value of the discipline and accelerate the implementation of pharmacy practice research in Flanders. Finally, writing a dissertation in which the findings are confronted with the literature data will undoubtedly contribute to the education of critical pharmacists, aspiring for a greater role in health care.