

Title: Influences on prescribing decisions by non-medical prescribers: a qualitative exploration.

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Abstract:

Background Non-medical prescribers (NMPs) make increasing contributions to patient care in many countries yet little is known about influences on their prescribing decisions. **Methods** After ethical approval semi-structured interviews were carried out with eight pharmacist prescribers and five nurse prescribers working in community pharmacy, primary and secondary care in Scotland. **Results** Participants prescribed for a wide range of conditions, addressing patients' sometimes complex health and social circumstances. All described multiple, sometimes contradictory influences reflected in overlapping determinants of behaviours. While this complexity was considered challenging the patient's social influence was central to prescribing decisions. Nurse prescribers (all primary care) described seeking support from pharmacists. Guidelines and particularly local formularies and protocols were reported as very influential. Most participants would occasionally prescribe out with these based on previous experience where they perceived this best met patients' needs. All participants described working in multi-disciplinary teams; doctors in particular were a valued source of advice and guidance. All considered prescribing an appropriate role for their profession. Participants described a rigorous approach to prescribing within their competence using interpersonal skills to manage patients' expectations and encourage self-care. Some described very occasionally prescribing antibiotics in response to patient demand rather than clinical need. **Conclusion** NMPs described a rigorous, patient-centred approach to prescribing decision-making with often complex, contradictory influences.