Automating the pharmacy workflow, not the Pharmacist

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Abstract

Introduction
With pharmacy minor ailments just around the corner, and POCT on the horizon, the role of the Ontario pharmacist is being elevated to that of a primary care practitioner. Three major themes have been identified surrounding pharmacists' apprehension towards this expanded scope: lack of time, competing priorities, and lack of confidence.

As virtual care evolves beyond just telemedicine services, the coinciding shift provides an opportunity for workflow automation technology to help alleviate these concerns.

Methods
Through pharmacist and patient interviews, we broke down the minor ailments assessment process into six parts and ordered these parts in a way to mimic current pharmacy workflow. Each part was analyzed to determine the suitability of various forms of time-saving automation and software was created to address these manual processes.

Results/Discussion
Our technology optimizes workflow inefficiencies, allowing pharmacists to spend less time on required clinical, regulatory, and administrative tasks. Natural language processing, assistive technology, and form automation all reduce the time required to complete assessments while also supporting better access and delivery of care to patients.

Conclusion
By alleviating the administrative burden of being a clinician, carefully applied workflow automation can free up pharmacists' time to focus on what matters: their patients. However, careful attention must be paid to the application of automation to ensure efficient delivery of care, without degrading the invaluable contribution of a pharmacist's critical judgement in driving the process.