
Availability of Multilingual Prescription
Medication Information for Limited English
Proficient Patients in New York City Pharmacies

April 2008

Linda Weiss, PhD

The New York Academy of Medicine

Funding for this project is provided by the Altman Foundation

Project Summary

- Project activities:
 - Descriptive research focused on the availability of translated prescription medication information for immigrants and other limited English proficient (LEP) New Yorkers, including:
 - Translated prescription medication labels
 - Translated medication instructions (patient information sheets)
 - Medication counseling provided at pharmacies
 - Factors affecting language access in pharmacy settings
 - Development and implementation of continuing education course for pharmacists
 - Pilot interventions at New York City pharmacies
-

NYC Pharmacy Survey: Methods

- Telephone survey of 200 randomly selected pharmacies from a list of all licensed NYC pharmacies (2100+) provided by the Office of Professions, NYS Education Department.
 - Interviews were conducted with a pharmacist on duty between February and August 2006 and took about 5 minutes each to complete.
-

Study Methods (*continued*)

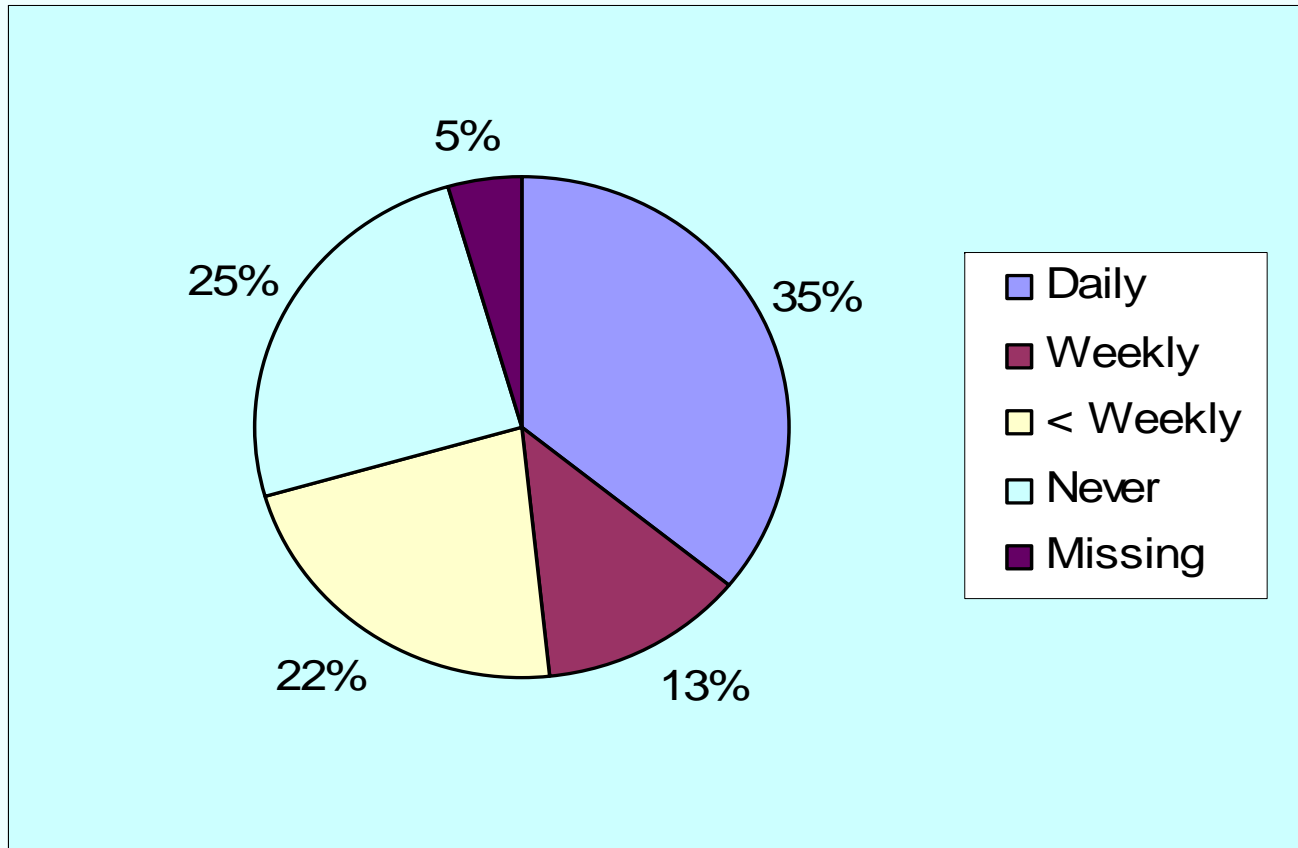
- Survey included questions on:
 - Frequency and language of LEP customers
 - Languages spoken by pharmacy staff
 - Ability to print translated medication labels and leaflets
 - Frequency of translations
 - Other policies and practices regarding multilingual medication information
-

Limited English Proficient Pharmacy Patients

- Pharmacist Self-Report
 - Daily LEP, any language 176 (88%)
 - *Daily Spanish* 156 (78%)
 - *Daily Chinese* 31 (16%)
 - *Daily Russian* 27 (14%)
 - Less than daily LEP 14 (7%)
 - No LEP customers 10 (5%)

 - Percent LEP in pharmacy census tract
 - Mean 24.4%
 - Range 3.2% - 62.9%
-

Frequency of Translation of Medication Labels (n = 176)*



* 176 pharmacies with LEP patients daily

Adjusted Odds for Daily Translation of Medication Labels

Characteristic	Adjusted Odds Ratio & (Confidence Interval)
Pharmacist birthplace	
USA/Canada/Puerto Rico	1.00
Asia/Pacific Islands	1.50 (0.64, 3.52)
South America/Caribbean	0.15 (0.01, 1.97)
Africa/Middle East	0.22 (0.03, 1.49)
Europe	1.20 (0.32, 4.39)
Pharmacy type	
Chain	1.00
Independent	4.08 (1.55, 10.74)**
Clinic/Outpatient hospital	6.43 (1.27, 32.48)*
Pharmacy neighborhood characteristics	
LEP in pharmacy neighborhood, Spanish speaking	1.09 (1.05, 1.13)**
LEP in pharmacy neighborhood, other Eur. Language	0.99 (0.92, 1.06)
LEP in pharmacy neighborhood, Asian language	1.03 (0.99, 1.06)

*p <.05 in multivariate logistic regression

** p < 0.01 in multivariate logistic regression

Pharmacy Capacity to Provide Medication Information in Languages other than English

	Spanish n (%)	Chinese n (%)	Russian n (%)	Any Language n (%)
Translated labels & patient information sheets				
Main label	143 (71.5%)	24 (12.0%)	19 (9.5%)	159 (79.5%)
Patient information sheet	103 (51.5%)	9 (4.5%)	8 (4.0%)	103 (51.5%)
Warning label				88 (44.0%)
Verbal information in languages other than English				
Yes	149 (74.5%)	28 (14.0%)	24 (12.0%)	177 (88.5%)
By pharmacist	44 (22.0%)	23 (11.5%)	17 (8.5%)	86 (43.0%)
By other staff	117 (58.5%)	6 (3.0%)	10 (5.0%)	133 (66.5%)
Telephone interpretation				
Yes				27 (13.5%)
No				172 (86.0%)

Most pharmacies (75%) have dispensing software with translation capabilities. 2 respondents said they developed their own translation software. 9 respondents said they handwrite the translations.

Translated Medication Labels: Determining Who Gets Them

■ Can tell through interaction	108	(54.0%)
■ Language in customer record	20	(10.0%)
■ Customer requests translation	66	(33.0%)
■ Indicated on the prescription	14	(7.0%)
■ Sign in pharmacy	15	(7.5%)
■ Word of mouth	21	(10.5%)

Four pharmacists reported that translated labels are provided to all patients except those requesting English only.

Barriers to Increased Language Access

- Pharmacists concerned about translating into languages they don't understand – concerned about liability if there is an error

 - Inadequacies in translation software
 - Programs may only print one language at a time. May need to print two labels to have English and a second language
 - Translations may be awkward, not grammatically correct

 - Demands on pharmacists' time are already very high. Some feel there is not time for translation

 - Shortage of qualified bilingual staff

 - Pharmacists perceptions and level of awareness
-

Improving Language Access: Continuing Education Course

- 3 hour course developed by the Center for Immigrant Health, New York University School of Medicine
 - Course includes information on:
 - immigrant demographics & immigrant health
 - cultural competence
 - language and English proficiency
 - medication safety (as related to language)
 - overcoming language barriers
 - Offered twice at St. John's in autumn 2007
 - Will be revised following pilot interventions and offered twice in 2008
-

Improving Language Access: Pilot Interventions

- Interventions being conducted at approximately 8 NYC pharmacies, including:
 - Hospital outpatient pharmacies
 - Clinic pharmacy
 - Community based independent pharmacies
 - Home delivery pharmacy
 - Interventions may include:
 - Telephone interpreter service
 - Interpreter training and assessment
 - Multilingual patient information
 - Signage
 - Reviews of translations for accuracy
-

For more information....

Linda Weiss, PhD

The New York Academy of Medicine

Email: lweiss@nyam.org

Phone: 212-822-7298
