

ANALYSIS OF PHARMACISTS' PERCEPTION REGARDING THE SERVICES OF THE MEDICINES INFORMATION CENTER OF THE PORTUGUESE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

The Medicines Information Center of the Portuguese Pharmaceutical Society (CIM-OF) was created in 1984 with the aim of providing pharmacists with latest evidence-based information about medicines and therapeutics. Over the years, it has continuously endeavored to develop activities that address the needs of the members of the Portuguese Pharmaceutical Society (OF), in parallel with responding to specific requests on the therapeutic use and safety of medicines, as well as on pharmaceutical intervention.¹

The greater accessibility of information resources on medicines and pharmacotherapy, especially in electronic format, therapeutic innovation and the evolution of the pharmaceutical profession may condition changes in information needs and/or the way in which this information should be conveyed.² In order to gauge this, it is essential to gather input from users/recipients of the services provided by CIM-OF.

PURPOSE

Evaluate pharmacists' perceptions regarding the various activities provided by CIM-OF, including their satisfaction with each service, and gather suggestions for improvements and potential new activities.

METHODS

A survey (Google Forms) was conducted between the 16th and the 31st of March 2024. It was posted on the OF website and sent by email to pharmacists who gave consent to be contacted. The questions addressed their knowledge and use of the services provided by CIM-OF, as well as their perceptions of the activities carried out – publications, sessions and others. Suggestions for improvement and proposals for developing new contents were also requested.

RESULTS

The survey was sent to 17.935 pharmacists, with 534 responses received (3% response rate), mainly from female members (86%), aged 35-44 (31%) and working in community pharmacy (65.7%) (Figures 1 and 2). Nearly half of the responses (46.6%) came from pharmacists from Lisbon and Porto districts.

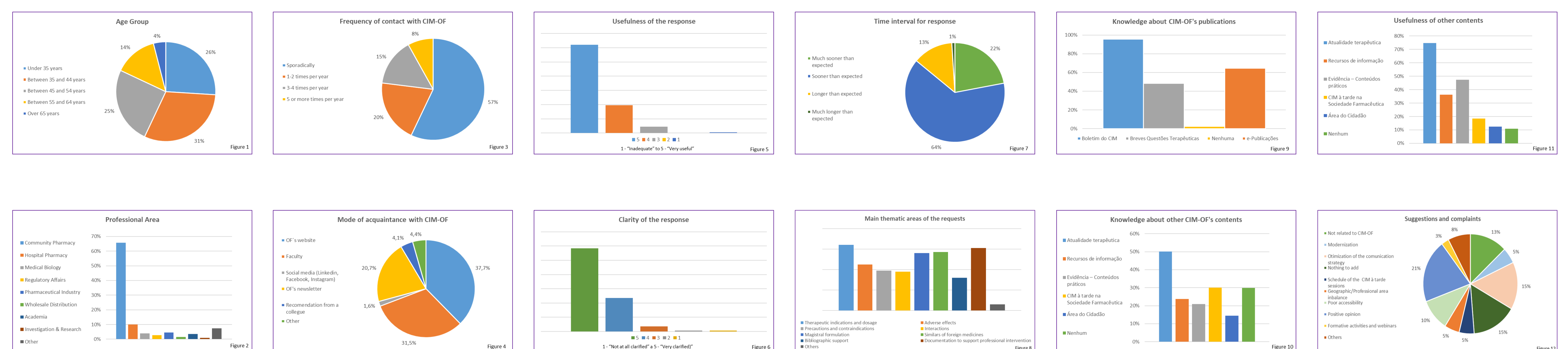
Among the respondents, 81% reported knowing CIM-OF and, of those, 40% usually contacted it, mostly up to 1-2 times a year (77%). (Figure 3) The majority found out about the center through the OF website or through its daily newsletter. (Figure 4) The average ratings for the usefulness and clarity of the responses provided were 4.65 (1- "Inadequate" to 5 – "Very useful") and 4.61 (1- "Not at all clarified" to 5 – "Very clarified") (Figures 5 and 6), respectively, with 64% of respondents considering that the response was provided sooner than expected. (Figure 7). The main thematic areas in which support has been requested were related to the correct (indications or dosage) and safe (adverse effects, precautions or interactions) use of medicines, but also documentation to support professional intervention, similars of foreign medicines and magistral formulation (Figure 8).

Regarding CIM-OF's publications, *Boletim do CIM* is the most well-known (95.6%) and the most widely read [average 3.63: (1- "Never" to 5- "Always")], followed by *e-Publicação* (64.4% and 3.03, respectively) (Figure 9). The topics covered were considered useful [average 4.83: (1- "Not at all useful" to 5- "Very useful")].

The topics covered in *CIM à Tarde* sessions were considered relevant [average 4.41: (1- "Not at all relevant" to 5- "Very relevant")]; however, only 10.1% said they attended. Regarding other website contents, *Atualidade terapêutica* is the most well-known (50.1%) and considered the most useful (74.7%) (Figures 10 and 11).

The overall satisfaction with CIM-OF's services was positive [average 7.69 (1- "Not at all satisfied" to 10- "Extremely satisfied")], with a high likelihood of recommendation [average 8.15 (1- "Not at all likely" to 10- "Extremely likely")].

Among the proposals for new content, the most notable was the provision of training in medicines information. Regarding the suggestions and complaints made, the most significant was the need to enhance service promotion (Figure 12).



CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the survey results shows that, although there is a high level of awareness about CIM-OF among the pharmacists who responded, many are still unaware that there is a department within OF that provides them with technical and scientific support. Additionally, most members who are aware of CIM-OF do not use its services.

The overall evaluation made by CIM-OF users is very favourable, particularly regarding responses to inquiries—passive information. Concerning the publications produced—active information—*Boletim do CIM* is the best known and most widely read. Among the other resources, the most recognized and perceived as the most useful is *Atualidade terapêutica*. Although about one-third of respondents are aware of the *CIM à Tarde* sessions, only 10% report attending them. Suggestions for improvement mainly focus on better communication about CIM-OF's services and the provision of training in the topic of drug information.

Regrettably, only 3% of the pharmacists contacted responded to the survey, which poses a significant limitation. The low participation rate does not allow for a comprehensive perspective on pharmacists' perceptions of the services provided or a clear understanding of which areas should be further developed. It is essential to optimise communication with pharmacists and to promote the services provided by CIM-OF in order to increase its use and to boost consensus-building activities.

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