



## COMPLETED GRANT SYNOPSIS

### Study of Interruptions in Community Pharmacies

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#### Objectives

The overall goal of this research project was to gain a deeper understanding of the nature and sources of interruptions that occur in community pharmacies and common strategies that pharmacists utilize to manage interruptions. The following specific aims supported this goal:

1. To describe the frequency and common sources of interruptions in community pharmacies;
2. To describe why interruptions occur in community pharmacies; and
3. To describe strategies that pharmacists employ to manage interruptions in their practice

#### Methods

Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This project employed a qualitative study design with direct observations of study participants followed by semi-structured interviews.</li> <li>• Three community pharmacy work environments were represented in the data collection: 2 independent pharmacies, 2 mass merchandise pharmacies, and two hospital/clinic pharmacies</li> <li>• Thematic analysis was conducted on completed observation field notes and interview transcripts.</li> </ul>
Study endpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sources and frequency of interruptions in community pharmacies</li> <li>• Situation awareness as a strategy for interruption management</li> </ul>

#### Results

- Pharmacists are interrupted frequently. We observed a range of 3-16 interruptions/hour
- The sources of interruptions were primarily from patients, but a significant number of interruptions were from technicians, or were self-initiated or technology related.
- The primary strategy to manage interruptions was observed to be a “big picture” awareness of what was going on in the pharmacy, known as situation awareness. When pharmacists were able to observe, interpret, and anticipate interruptions, they were able to better decide whether to engage in an interrupted task, or finish their primary task before addressing the interruption.

#### Conclusion

This study showed that interruptions occur frequently in community pharmacies and can create potential patient safety hazards. The causes for these are multifactorial but can be generally categorized into external interruptions and self-interruptions. Strategies or tools that improve situational awareness in the pharmacy may help facilitate better interruptions management.