

# Assessment of minor health disorders with decision tree-based triage in community pharmacies

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## Abstract

**Background:** Triage in community pharmacies can lower the burden of minor health disorders on other primary health care settings. The netCare service, introduced in 2012 by the Swiss association of pharmacists, provides community pharmacists with 27 decision trees for the triage of minor health disorders.

**Objectives:** (1) to describe the utilization and symptom resolving rate of decision trees in community pharmacies; (2) to identify the need for additional decision trees.

**Methods:** A descriptive, explorative analysis was conducted of netCare consultations between January 2019 and March 2020, as documented in phS-net, a service platform for public pharmacies. Client characteristics, week- days, recommended course of action, availability of a general practitioner, and hypothetical course of action if netCare would not have been available were investigated. Follow-up information was assessed for resolution of symptoms and prevention of needing additional services. Data from consultations with empty assessment forms were used to identify minor health disorders in need of an additional decision tree.

**Results:** Information on 4256 performed netCare consultations were identified over a 14-month observation period, resulting in an average of 284 decision tree consultations per month in Switzerland. Customers were mainly female (n = 3253, 76.4%) with a mean age of 40.7 years ( $\pm 18.5$  years). Cystitis (39.5%), conjunctivitis (19.5%), and pharyngitis (10.9%) were the primary reasons for consultation. Minor health disorders were managed by pharmacists themselves (88.2%) and achieved a resolution rate of 84.7%. Eyelid inflammations were identified as in need for an additional decision tree.

**Conclusion:** Pharmacist-led structured triaging services in Switzerland led to an 84.7% resolution rate of minor health disorders, thereby identifying the potential for pharmacists to minimize the demand on other primary health care providers.

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