

Pharmacist Experience With Chronic Pain Management and Opioid Stewardship in Team-Based Primary Care in Ontario

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INTRODUCTION

7.63 million Canadians suffer from chronic pain [1]. During 2016-17, Ontario witnessed 73% increase in hospitalizations attributed to opioids misuse [2]. Team-based primary care now serves nearly 25% of Ontarians [3] but the role of primary care team-based pharmacists in opioid stewardship is not well documented.

OBJECTIVE

This study examines team-based primary care pharmacist experiences in chronic pain management and opioid stewardship in Ontario.

METHOD

- Pharmacists (N=88, out of ~200) working in team-based primary care settings across Ontario participated in a provincial survey about clinical activities in chronic pain management and opioid stewardship.
- 15 pharmacists then agreed to attend teleconferenced, semi-structured interviews that explored their perspectives on their role in chronic pain and opioid stewardship, challenges and opportunities in team-based primary care.
- The interviews were recorded and transcribed using a web-based teleconferencing platform.
- Two team members coded data with participants' words being grouped in concrete pieces of data that addressed a specific content point.
- All data pieces were allocated to relevant themes and sub-themes, clearly defined to avoid confusion or overlap. A code book was used to clearly define themes and subthemes.
- Transcriptions were sent to interviewees to double-check accuracy and confidentiality.

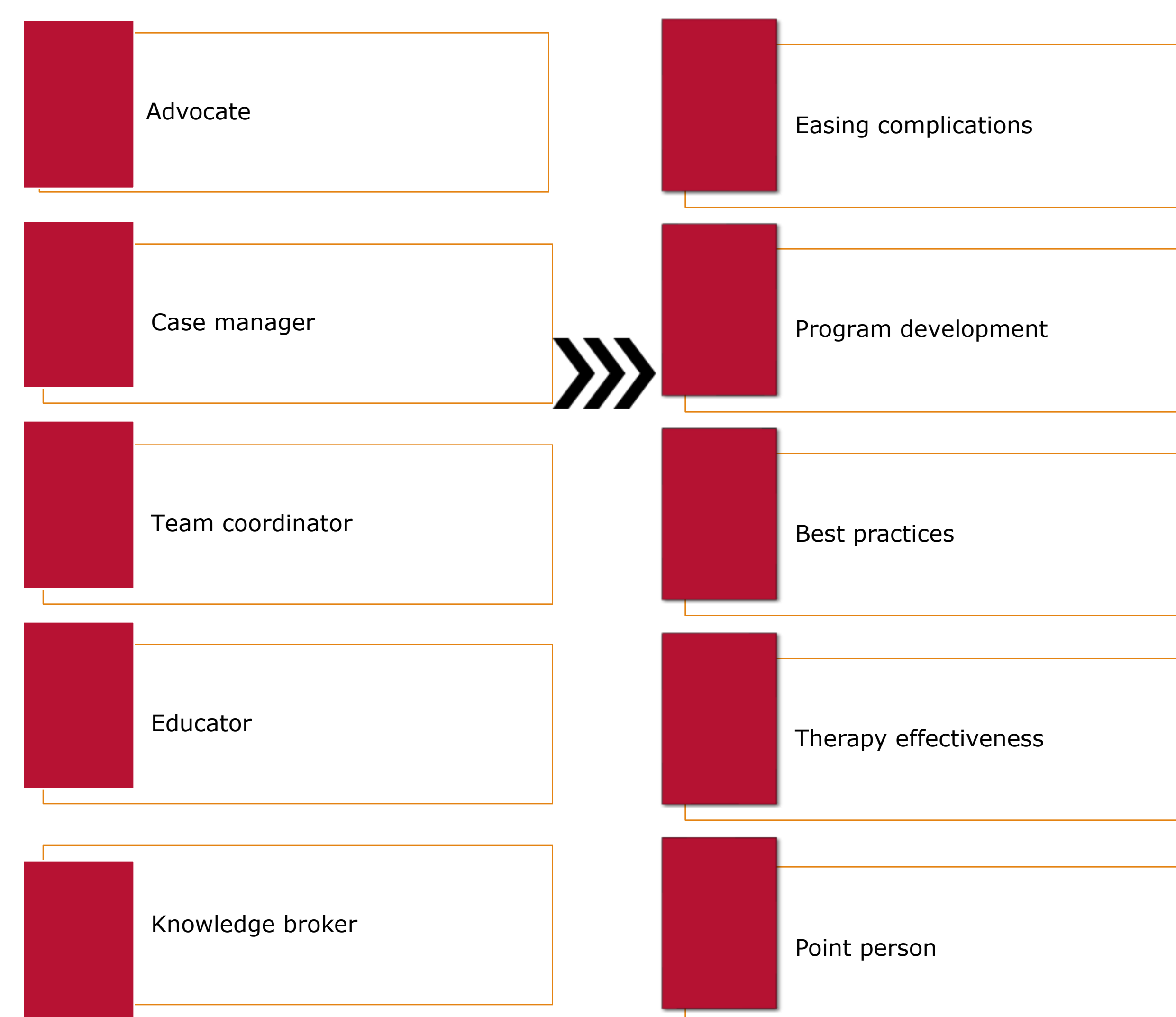
The physicians don't have enough time to listen to the patient, which I think is really important, so I really kind of advocate for that, so you know spending time listening to the patient what their concerns are.

I could help with tapering or it could help with choosing doing a more comprehensive pain assessment so depending on what the role of the pharmacist is in a team there's a ton that they could help with.

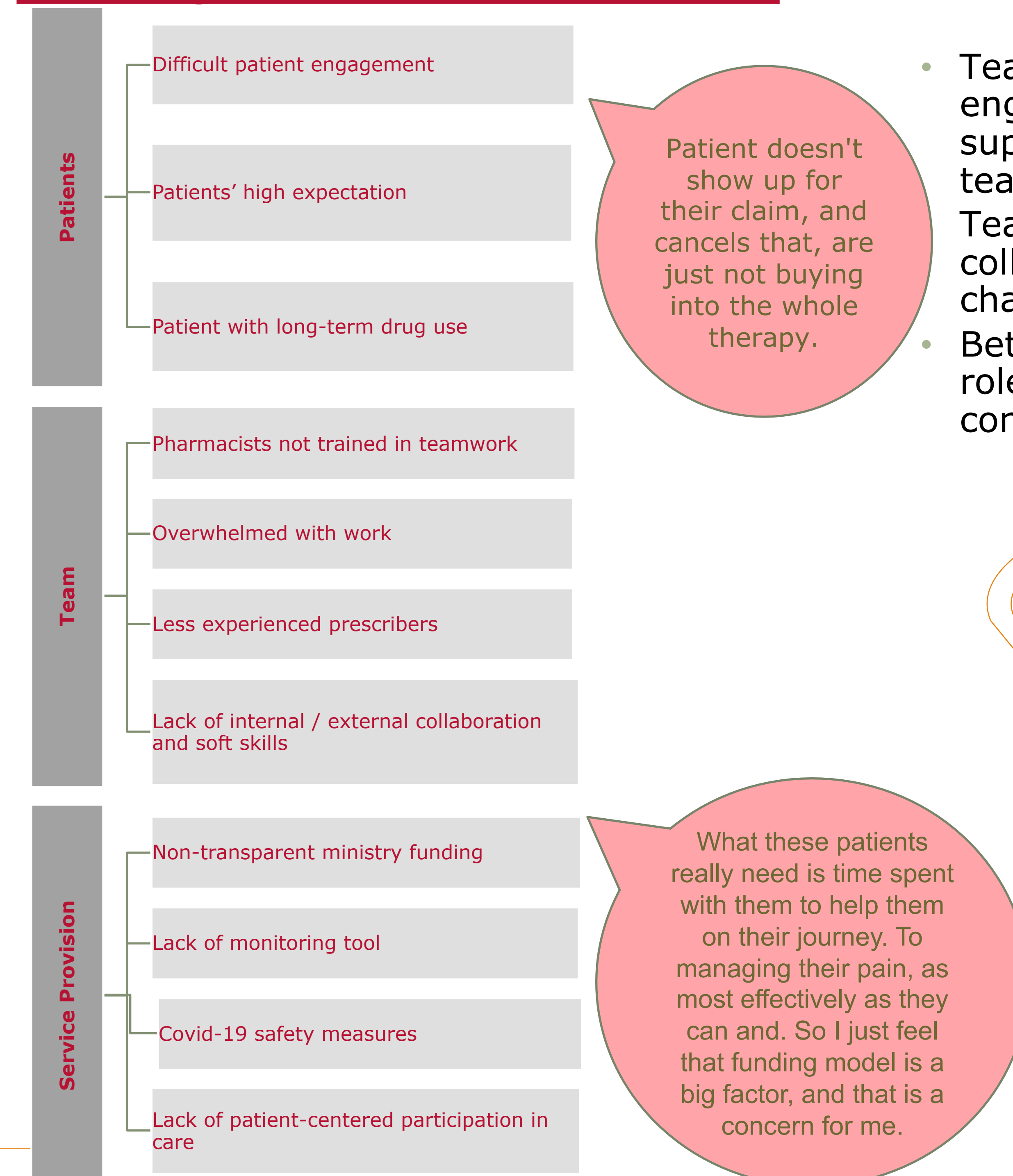
SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- Participants (N=15) demonstrated **understanding for patients with chronic pain and the need for a balanced approach** in management.
- Their **role centred around** advising prescribers on treatment decision-making, providing education to patients and team members, harmonizing prescriber-patient relations, making referrals and advocating for change as appropriate.
- Perceived challenges** included: patient engagement, understanding prescriber expectations, limited training resulting in low confidence with certain tasks, and lack of an effective funding model leading to inadequate time spent with patients, negatively impacting quality of care.
- Participants expressed **positive attitudes** toward team-based collaborative practice and appreciated the interdependence of team members.
- Managing **competing interests or clinical approaches** with prescribers and patients was described as challenging.

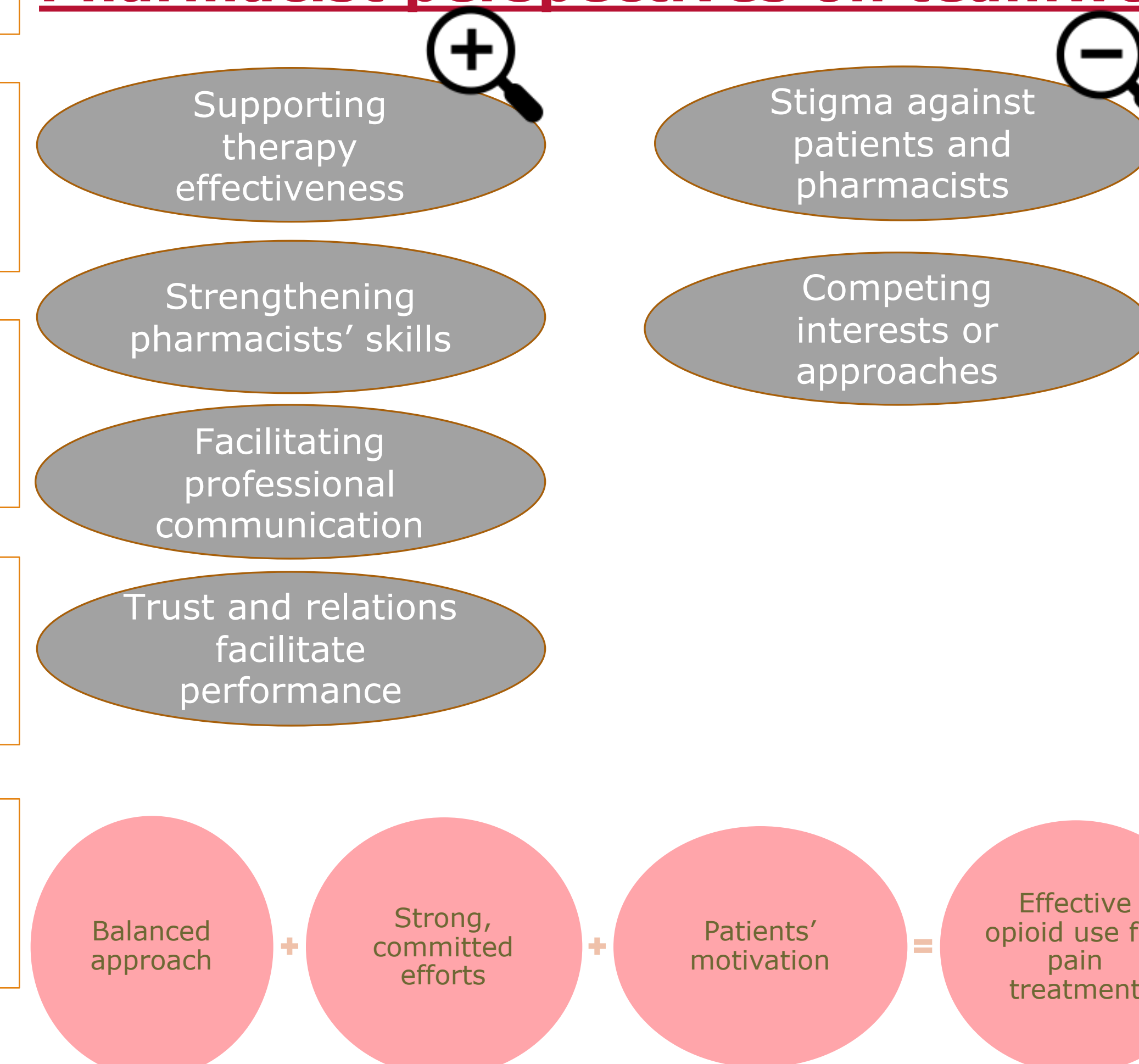
Pharmacist roles and their significance



Challenges with team-based care

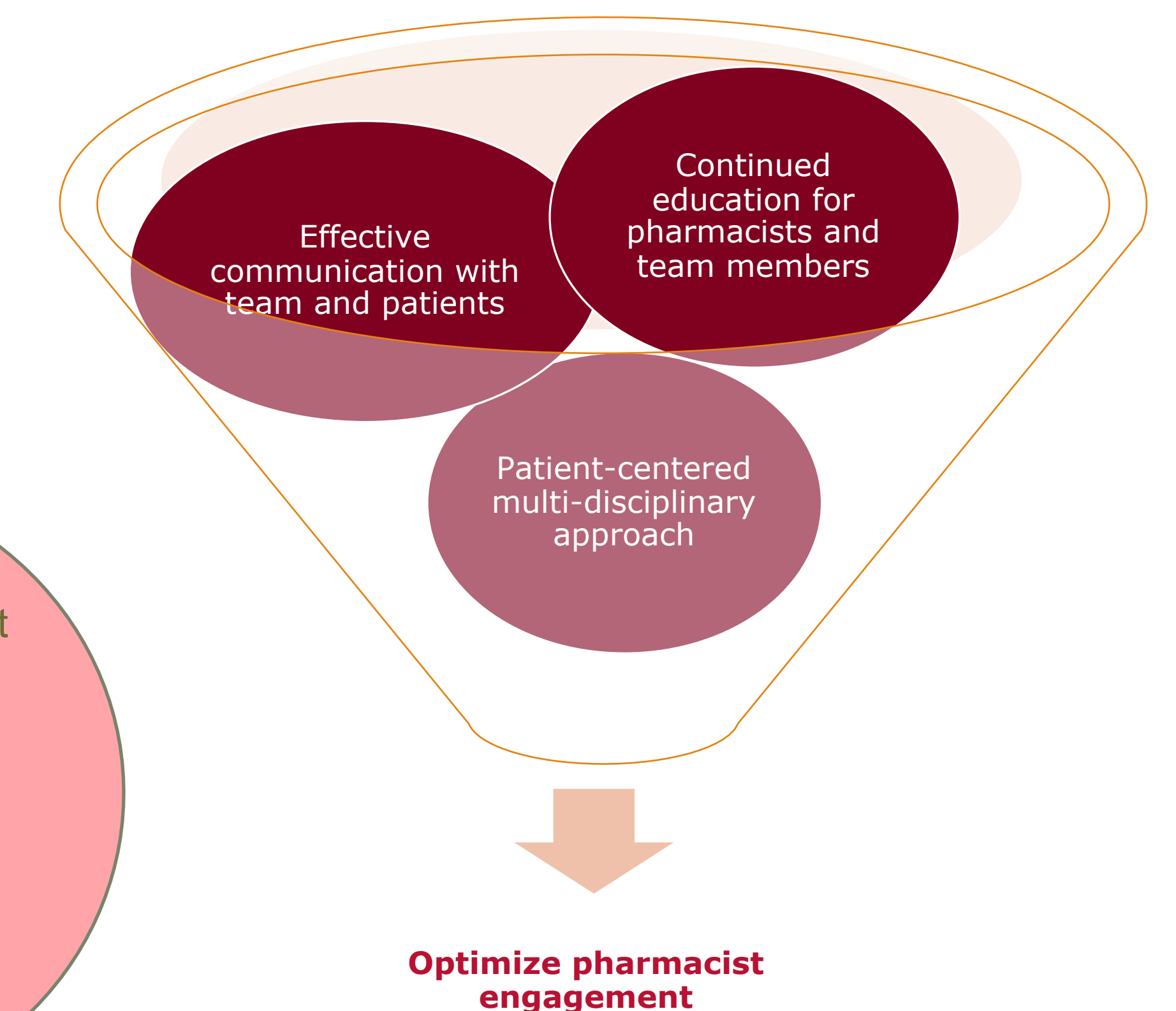


Pharmacist perspectives on teamwork



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Team-based primary care pharmacists engage in a wide range of clinical activities supporting patients with chronic pain and team members. Team-based practice offers unique collaborative opportunities but also distinct challenges.
- Better understanding of this relative novel role can help optimize pharmacist contribution in this setting.



REFERENCES

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- [3] Ashcroft, R., Donnelly, C., Gill, S., Dancey, M., Lam, S., Grill, A. K., & Mehta, K. (2021). The Delivery of Patient Care in Ontario's Family Health Teams during the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Healthcare policy = Politiques de sante*, 17(2), 72-89. <https://doi.org/10.12927/hcpol.2021.26656>

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