

Reporting on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of pharmacists regarding the active offer of French language health services in Ontario: a quantitative survey study

OBJECTIVE and BACKGROUND:

This article explores the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of Ontario pharmacists regarding the **active offer (AO)** of services in French.

AO is a **proactive offer of services in the patient's official language of choice**, made before any request, and helps ensure the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality of services (AAAQ framework). In Ontario, despite the presence of a large Francophone population, access to pharmacy services in French remains limited. Pharmacists, often the first point of contact, play a key role in linguistic accessibility, but few studies have evaluated their involvement in AO.

KEY RESULTS:

- Of the pharmacists who responded, 21.1% were French-speaking; 71.8% practiced in areas with a low French-speaking presence (<10%).
- French-speaking pharmacists and those in French-speaking environments had higher scores on all dimensions.
- There was no difference based on experience or geographic location.
- **Limited knowledge:** average score of 1.8/5
 - Only 20% were familiar with OA; 7.5% provided a correct definition.
 - Several confusions with OA-related services.
- **Positive attitudes:** average score of 3.8/5
 - Importance given to strategies such as bilingual resources and labels and French-speaking consultation services.
 - Less importance given to proactive strategies (e.g., bilingual greetings).
- **Infrequent behaviors:** average score of 2.0/5
 - Most common strategies: bilingual materials, using bilingual colleagues, asking the patient about their preferred language.
 - Least common strategies: bilingual greetings, bilingual interview questionnaires, requesting French-speaking interpreters, and carrying identification indicating the ability to provide services in French.

INTERPRETATIONS:

- Limited understanding of the proactive nature of OA is a significant barrier to its implementation.
- Although attitudes are positive, uptake remains limited, even for French-speaking pharmacists, revealing a lack of training and practical strategies.
- OA could improve linguistic access and quality of care according to the AAAQ framework, but it is still underutilized in pharmacy.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Strengthen training:** integrate OA into university curricula and continuing education for all pharmacists.
- **Institutionalize OA:** integrate this practice into professional standards and pharmacy planning.
- Create **visible bilingual environments:** signage, greetings, and tools to standardize OA from the first contact.
- Support areas with a low French-speaking presence: develop practical tools to ensure equitable provision.

For more information, see:

Timony, P., Leone, A., Caron, C., Giguère, P., Thabet, P., Gauthier, A., Waite, N. M., & Landry, C. (2025). Reporting on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of pharmacists regarding the active offer of French language health services in Ontario: A quantitative survey study. *Canadian pharmacists journal: CPJ = Revue des pharmaciens du Canada: RPC*, 158(3), 161–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17151635241308874>

For questions or comments, please contact Patrick Timony (pe_timony@laurentian.ca).

This brief was developed in partnership with the Ontario SPOR Support Unit Francophone Initiative. Visit us at <https://savoirmontfort.ca/initiative-francophone/>

This text was written with the support of OpenAI's ChatGPT tool for the synthesis and writing of scientific content.