

# Intervention Strategy to Support Community Pharmacists Management of Substance Use Disorder

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## Introduction

- Substance use disorder (SUD) is a chronic and relapsing disease that needs a complex and holistic approach for effective treatment(1).
- Early detection, referral to treatment, and harm reduction strategies can reduce the harmful consequences of SUD, improve the quality of life including health, social situation, and reduce economic burden of SUD (2).
- Regular contact of community pharmacists with their clients provides great opportunity to deliver early onset health initiatives for people who suffer from SUD with low cost.
- Community pharmacists are willing to provide SUD interventions that endorse their role as public health advocate; however, lack of education and training was identified as the major hurdle for pharmacists' involvement (3, 4) .
- Continuing education may
  - bridge the gap between practice and research.
  - equip community pharmacists with the knowledge and skills they need for effective SUD management.

## Objectives

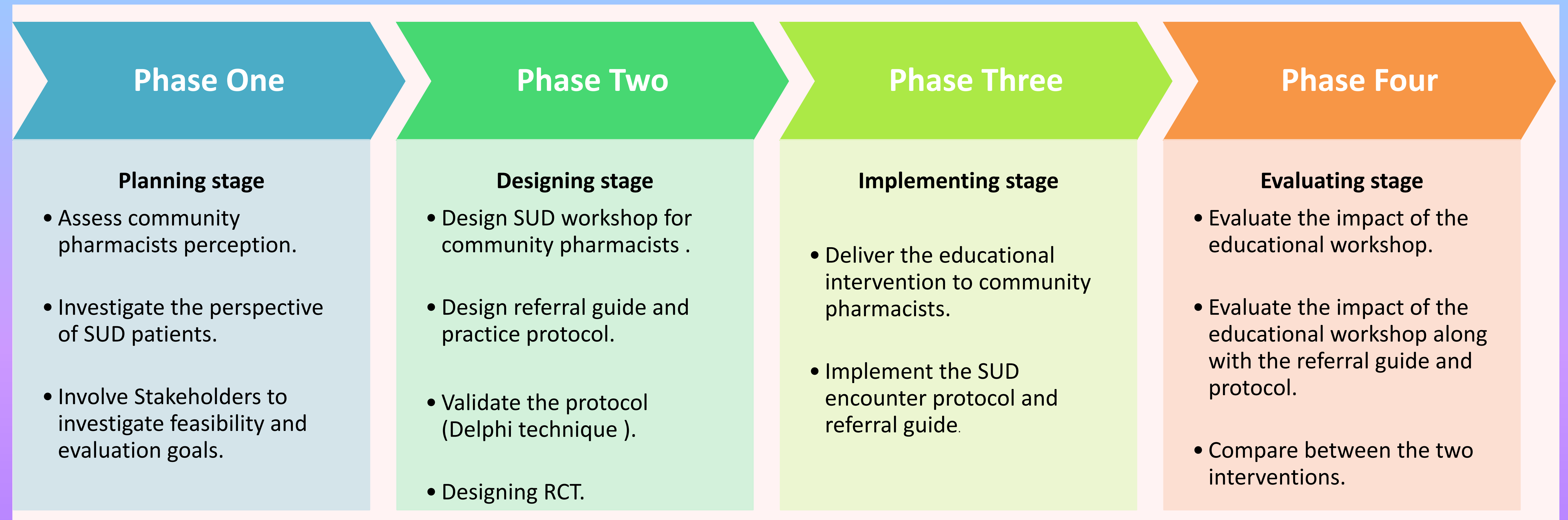
The project is community-driven and is initiated based on needs, expressed by the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals. Project goals are:

- Assess the educational needs for community pharmacists, concerning SUD.
- Evaluate SUD patients' perspectives regarding current pharmaceutical care provided by community pharmacists.
- Design and evaluate appropriate educational interventions.

## References

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- (3) Lafferty L, Hunter TS, Marsh WA. Knowledge, attitudes and practices of pharmacists concerning prescription drug abuse. Journal of psychoactive drugs. 2006;38(3):229-32.
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## Stages of the Project



## Results

### Pharmacists Perspective:

A qualitative study was conducted in 2015 to investigate community pharmacists' perspectives and needs concerning SUD patient care (98). The study's outcomes identified the type of skills and educational programs community pharmacists need to improve SUD management. It also defined the preferred format of educational/ training program for pharmacists. Pharmacists also identified a need for tools like a protocol and referral guide to inform their encounters with SUD patients.

### SUD Patients Perspective:

During the summer of 2016, four focus groups with SUD patients were conducted to understand patients' expectations and satisfaction level with services they receive from community pharmacists. Participants expressed a need to receive respect and tolerance just like other patients. They also expressed their willingness to discuss their disease when appropriately engaged. High level of agreement was observed between pharmacists and patients on the need for education concerning the social element of SUD and training on proper communication skills.

### The Encounter Protocol and Referral Guide:

The encounter protocol and referral guide is designed based on the literature. The major goal of the encounter protocol is to provide community pharmacists with a roadmap to guide their encounter with SUD patients, possibly resulting in positive outcomes for the patients. It also allows pharmacists to assess the various needs of SUD patients without creating an unfavorable encounter (i.e. discomfort).

## Conclusion

- Pharmacists can have vital role in addressing SUD, as they are accessible health care providers with regular contact with community members.
- Lack of SUD education is one of the major barrier preventing pharmacists involvement in caring for SUD patients
  - ✓ Perception of pharmacists almost mirrored those of patients, regarding the need for education among community pharmacists.
- Health education is believed to be the most promising strategy to bridge the gap between practice and research.

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