

Scaling Cardiovascular Disease Risk Screening at Pharmacies in Viet Nam

Background

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) accounts for one-third of annual mortality in Viet Nam.¹ Early detection and management of CVD risk factors including hypertension or diabetes can dramatically reduce CVD-related mortality.² Hypertension is the most common CVD risk factor in Viet Nam and affects one out of every four adults in the country. Less than half of those living with hypertension are aware of their condition and only 13% are managing the condition with treatment. Improving convenient access to screening for CVD risk factors outside of public health facilities is critical to reducing CVD mortality in this context.

Solution

Pharmacies are a preferred source of health care for many individuals in Viet Nam and other southeast Asian countries because of their geographic proximity, convenient opening hours, low or no waiting time and wide availability of medicines. Three-fourths (74%) of all pharmacists surveyed in Viet Nam reported measuring blood pressure for clients at the pharmacy and 44% reported monitoring glucose levels—highlighting the role pharmacies already play in assessing CVD risks. Pharmacy counseling often covers common questions related to treatment adherence and lifestyle changes.

Pharmacists Answer Common Questions from Clients:

“What should I do when my blood pressure is too high?”

“If a person has high blood pressure, what should they avoid eating?”

“What lifestyle habits should I practice to manage hypertension?”

“Is high blood pressure really dangerous?”

“How does medication work to stabilize blood pressure?”

“When can I stop taking blood pressure medication?”



During 2022, SwipeRx—the largest digital network of pharmacy professionals in Viet Nam and five other markets in southeast Asia—partnered with the Novartis Foundation, the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute and PATH to scale pharmacy screening for hypertension and other CVD risks using technology.

Results

The following results were achieved between January-August 2022:



6,755 pharmacy clients screened for CVD risk factors in 128 days using the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Health's *Song Khoe* (“Healthy Living”) app.



125 pharmacies engaged with digital training and pharmacy client-facing countertop displays with QR codes to the *Song Khoe* app.



59,385 exposure points and 3,553 likes, shares or comments generated through a digital campaign highlighting benefits of in-pharmacy CVD screening for SwipeRx users.



364 retail pharmacy professionals from 36 provinces surveyed to assess barriers and opportunities related to community pharmacy screening for CVD risks.



Pharmacist Tran Thuy Tien in District 11 of Ho Chi Minh City explains how SwipeRx increased pharmacy screening for CVD risk factors:

“The number of clients agreeing to have their blood pressure measured at my pharmacy increased as a result of SwipeRx! After seeing the campaign in the SwipeRx app explaining how pharmacists should counsel clients at risk of cardiovascular disease, I felt much more comfortable suggesting in-pharmacy blood pressure measurement and use of the Song Khoe app to my clients.

“Because of SwipeRx, my pharmacy has helped many people, especially those who already have high blood pressure, but have not yet received treatment. After initial screening at my pharmacy, clients are more willing to visit the doctor so that they can get diagnosis and treatment before it is too late.”