

My day with Oncology Pharmacy - Austria

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1. Introduction

Data from Germany¹ from 2018 indicated the direction of development, pointing not only to a significant number of infusion therapies, but also to increased dispensing of oral medications in patients with cancer.

Therefore professionals were interviewed in March and April 2022 about their work situation in the preparation of patient-oriented oncology drugs using a standardized electronic questionnaire from the European Society of Oncology Pharmacy (ESOP), which was designed in English and translated into German.

All relevant daily work processes such as activities in prescribing and validation of cytotoxic drugs as well as their clinical pharmaceutical support in patient care were addressed.

This poster presents the country-specific evaluation in Austria.

2. Material and Method

The survey covered the following fields:

- Profession and workplace
- Manufacturing of patient specific ready-to-use cytotoxic drugs
- Activities performed (validation of the medical prescription, manufacturing of infusions, assisting the production, release of the products prepared)
- Dispensation of patient-orientated infusions only
- Transmission channel of the prescription (in writing, by fax, as a telephone call, by e-mail or online/software communication/internet)
- Average number of patient-specific infusions per day
- Contact with oncology patients
- Direct patient counseling
- Time spent on a weekly average on these activities during the workday

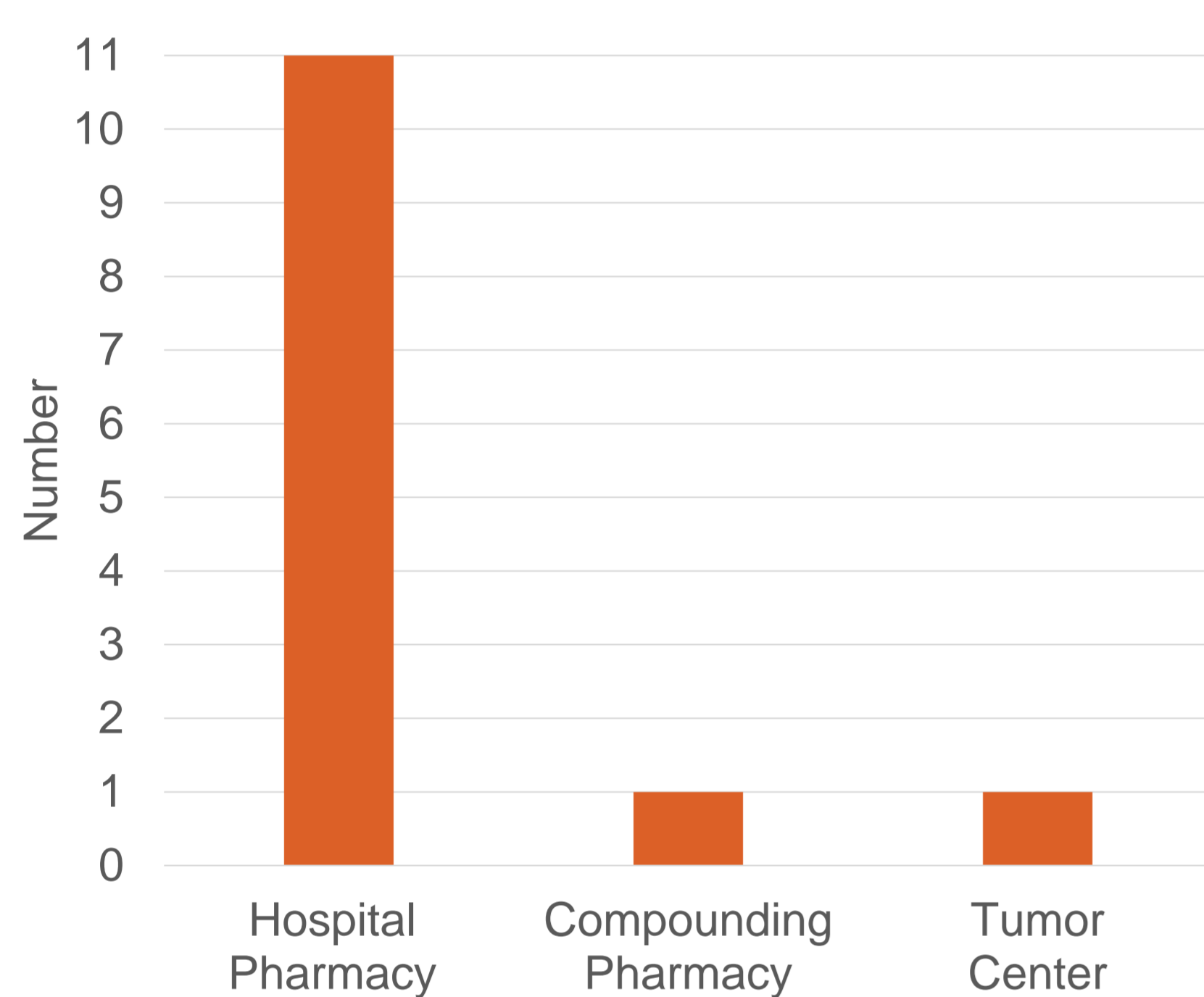


Fig.1: Working places

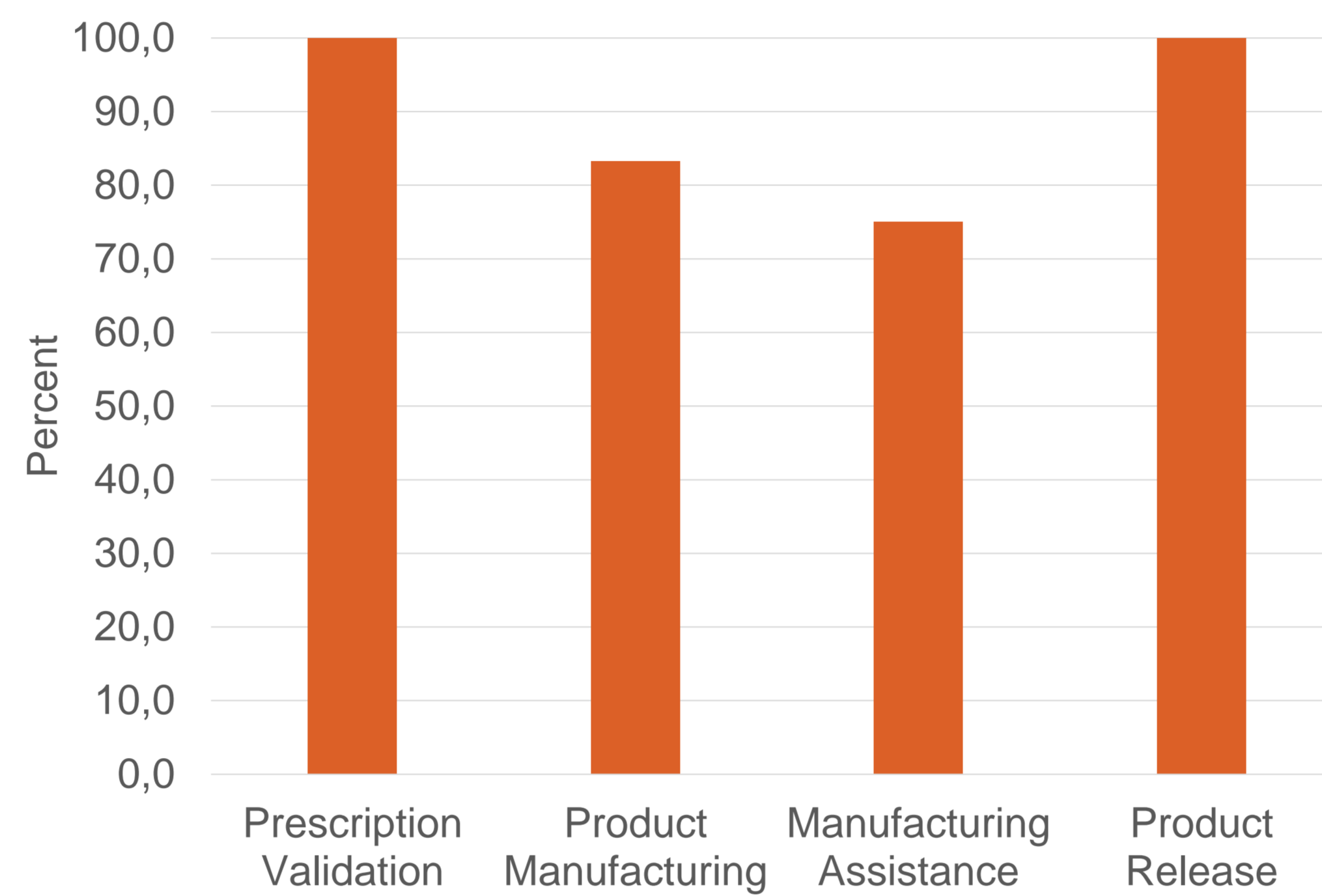


Fig.2: Distribution of activities performed

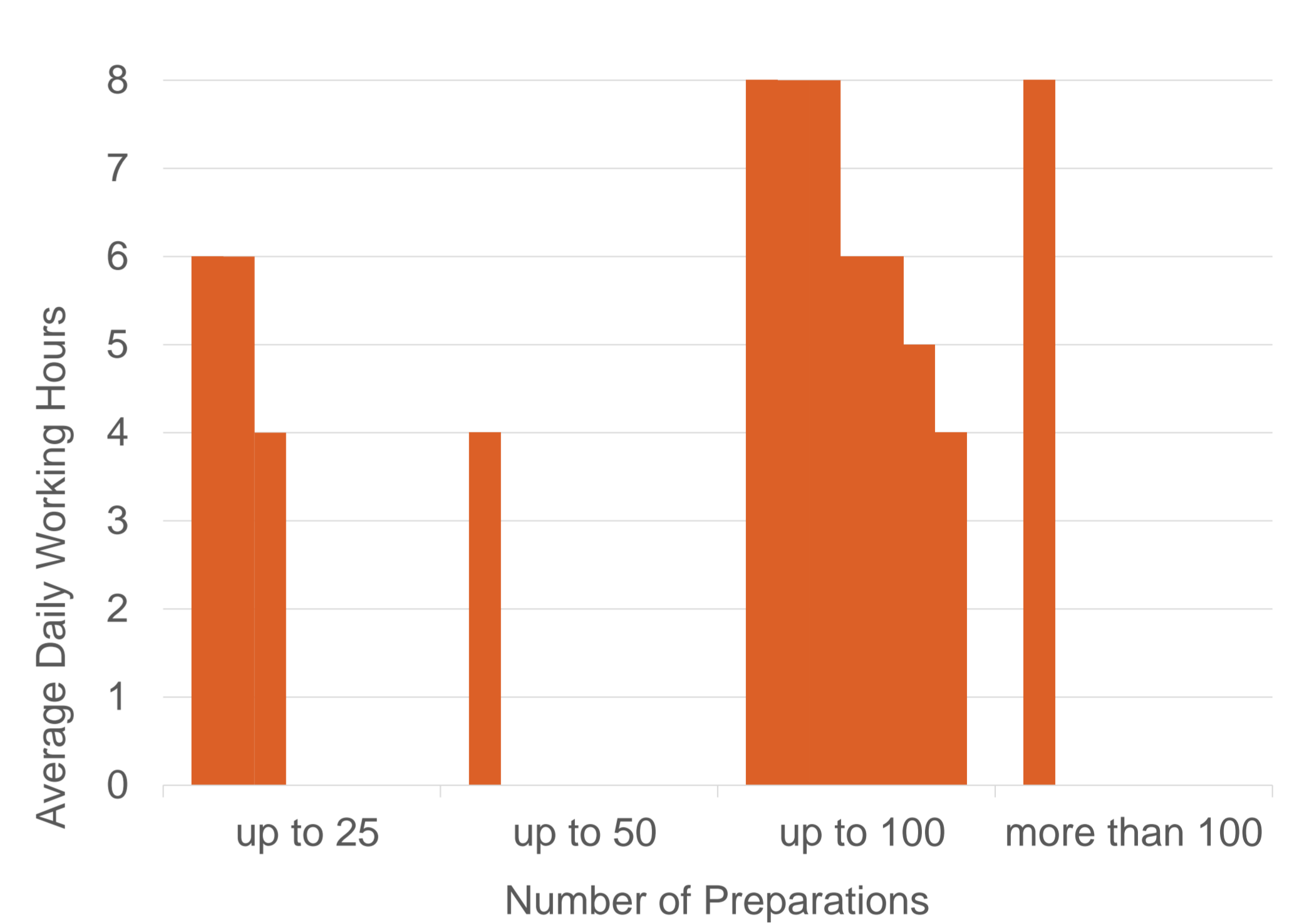


Fig.3: Daily working hours in relation to the number of daily produced ready-to-use infusions

3. Results and Discussion

13 individuals from Austria participated in the survey, all of them were pharmacists.

Most participants (n = 11 / 84.6%) were based in a hospital pharmacy. One was working in a compounding center and one in a tumor center.

12 of the 13 participating pharmacists (92.3%) were working at sites that are manufacturing patient orientated infusions. They are also responsible for the validation and release of the manufactured solutions.

10 pharmacists (76.9%) are involved in the manufacturing and 9 (69.2 %) of them do also assist during this process.

The predominant channel used for the transmission of prescriptions was *online/software communication/internet* while *fax* and *e-mail* were still used significantly in 2 sites each.

9 out of the 13 (69.2%) participants do not have contact to patients while working between 5 (n = 1 / 7.7%) and 8 hours (n = 3 for 6 hours, and n = 4 for 8 hours) per day in the oncology pharmacy unit.

3 out of 13 pharmacists (23.0%) do have access to patients while working only 4 hours per day in oncology pharmacy.

The average working time in sites that prepare up to 25 infusions vary between 4 and 8 hours, for up to 50 products 4 hours and for up to 100 and more than 100 infusions 4 to 8 hours (one of the participating sites only).

Fig.4: Release of medications in the Pharmacy

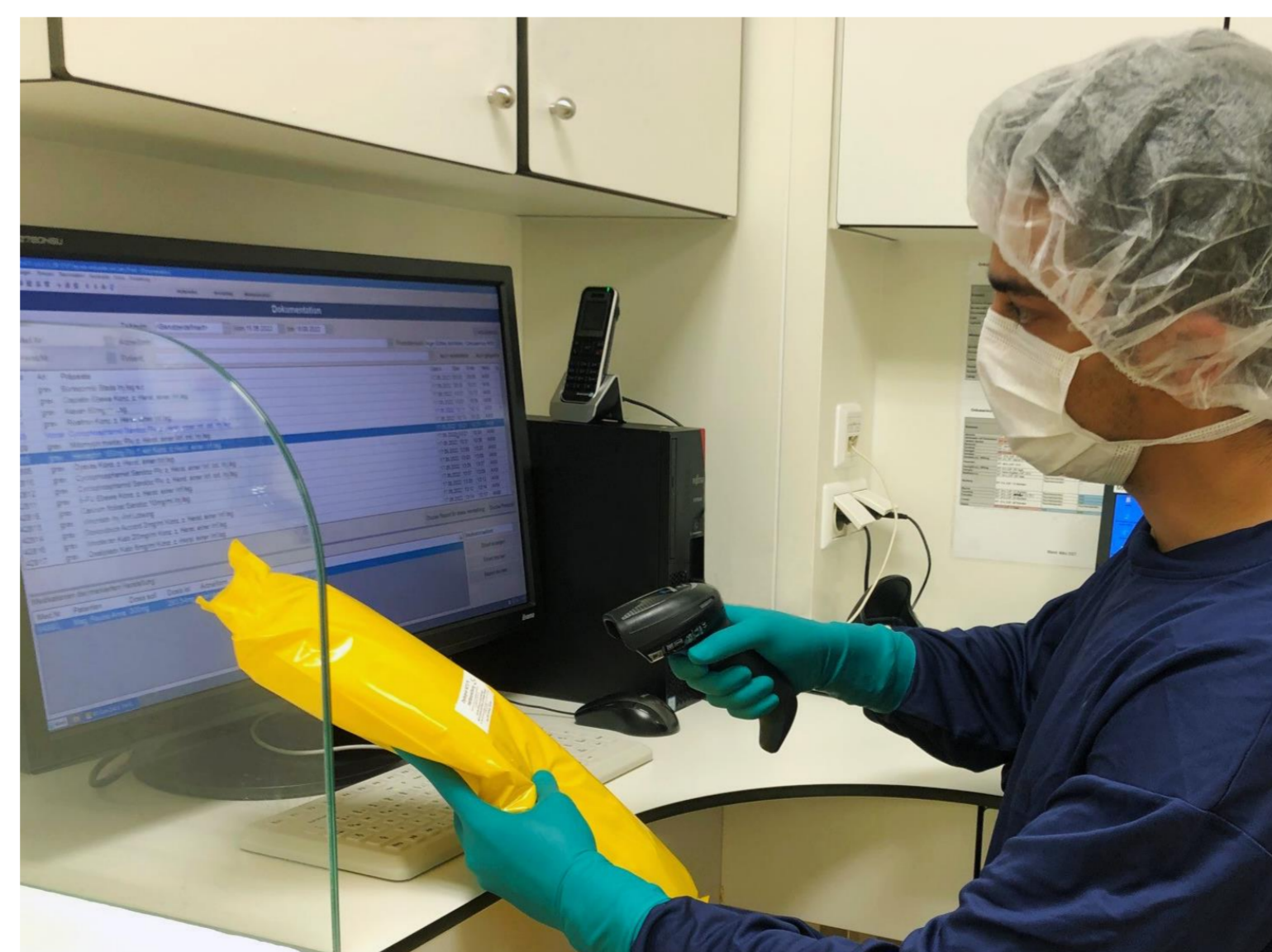


Fig.5: Working on the ward with a nurse



Conclusion

Pharmacists in Austria are still highly involved in manufacturing of oncology drugs (manufacturing and assistance). They are validating the physician's prescription and release the prepared solution. Due to the reimbursement situation in Austria oncology treatment is focused on hospital settings, therefore almost all of them are working in a hospital pharmacy. In conclusion it can be stated that oncology pharmacy in Austria is still very traditional, focused on manufacturing and with more working time dedicated to it than to clinical pharmacy tasks.

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References

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