

My day with Oncology Pharmacy - Estonia

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1. Introduction

In form of an ESOP survey in March and April 2022, professionals were asked about their working situation in preparation of ready-to-use cytotoxic drugs. All relevant daily working processes as activities in prescription and validation of cytotoxic drugs and also their clinical pharmaceutical support in patient care are addressed. This poster presents the situation in Estonia.

2. Material and method

The survey with 18 questions was translated into different languages and performed nationally using a web based application. In Estonia, survey was sent to all oncology pharmacists working in hospitals (n=6) that provide cancer care. Afterwards, responses were analysed.

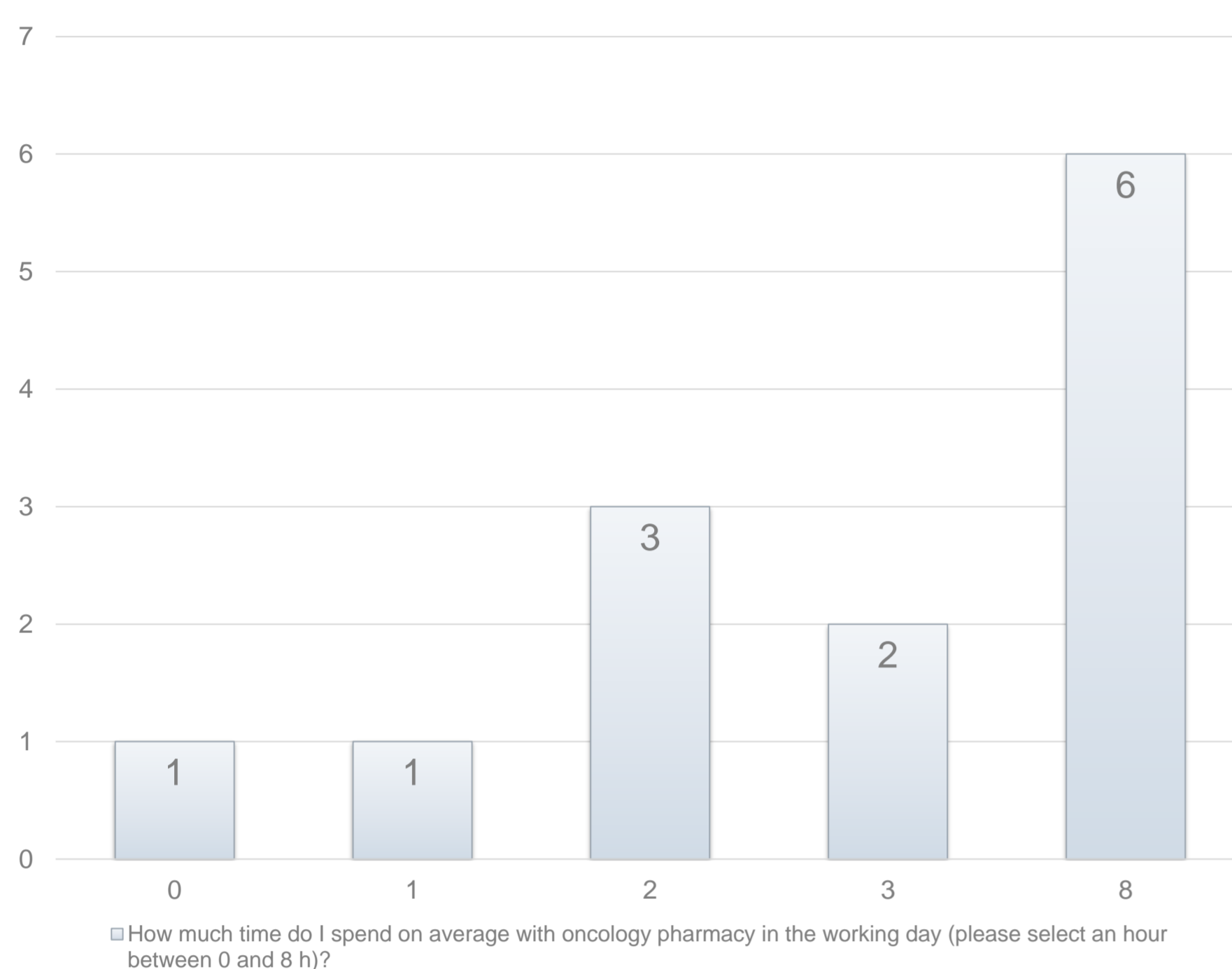


Fig.1: Number of hours a pharmacist is spending with oncology pharmacy services during the working day

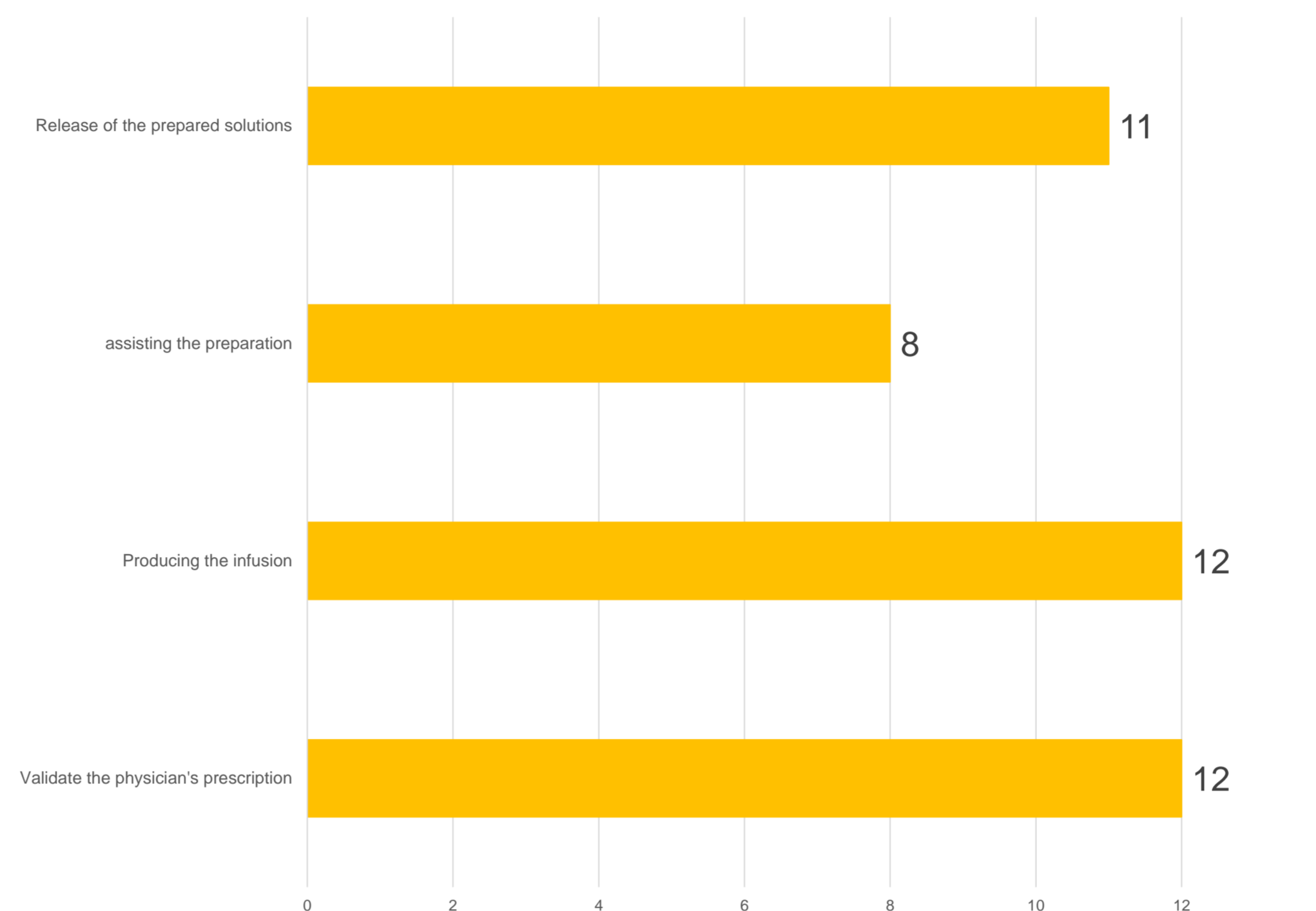


Fig.2: Activities performed by oncology pharmacists

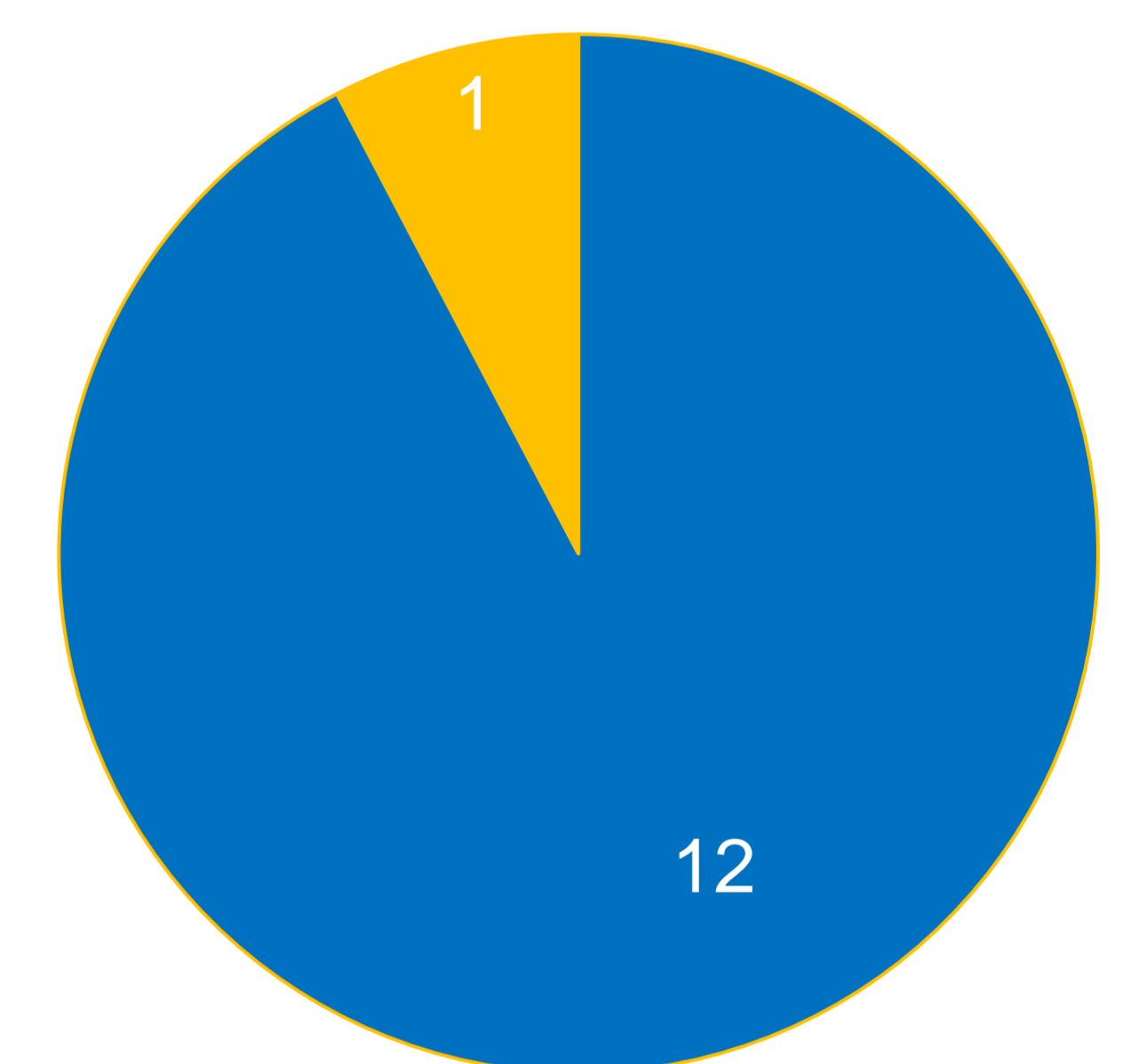


Fig.3: Number of oncology pharmacists who have direct contact with cancer patients

3. Results and discussion

According to the Estonian Health Statistics and Health Research Database almost 9000 cancer cases will be diagnosed in Estonia every year (1). Six centres out of 20 state hospitals are providing cancer care in Estonia and specialized oncology pharmacists and technicians are working in all those centres. Three of the centres (2 in Tallinn, 1 in Tartu) are providing all types of cancer care (diagnostics, surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, follow up services), three smaller hospitals provide only chemotherapy service to previously diagnosed patients. All together, 13 pharmacist from above mentioned 6 centres responded to the survey. Half of the pharmacists (n=6) are spending 100% of their working time providing oncology pharmacy services (Figure 1). Most of pharmacists are responsible of reconstitution service as well as drug handling processes (Figure 2). However, only minority of pharmacists have direct contact with cancer patients and provide counselling to patients (Figure 3).



Fig.4: In Estonian hospitals, all chemotherapy will be prepared by oncology pharmacists and pharmacy assistants in dedicated areas within hospital pharmacy. Photo is taken at the North Estonian Medical Centre, Tallinn.



Fig.5: Oncology pharmacists are working in close collaboration with oncologists and oncology nurses. Photo is taken in the outpatient ward of the Tartu University Hospital, Tartu.

Conclusion

In Estonia, 6 hospitals are treating cancer patients and oncology pharmacists are working all of those settings. Main areas of oncology pharmacy services such as procurement, handling, reconstitution and dispensing of cancer medicines as well as counselling other healthcare professionals and patients are performed by specialized oncology pharmacists and technicians. In the future, more attention should be given for patient education and direct counselling by oncology pharmacists.

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