
POSTER ABSTRACT**Strengthening Cardiovascular Care Through a Population-Based Approach
in Pharmacies as part of the CARDIO4Cities health strategy in Leuven.**

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Background: Most cardiovascular diseases are preventable by addressing risk factors such as smoking, unhealthy diet, and physical inactivity. Still cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for about 32% of all global deaths(1); in Belgium alone, around 31,000 people die each year and an estimated 754,000 live with a cardiovascular condition(2)– showing that more action is needed to prevent, detect and treat these diseases early.

Approach: It is important to detect cardiovascular disease and risk factors early to prevent disease progression. With an average of 100 patient contacts per day(3) pharmacists are the most accessible primary care providers, ideally positioned to play a greater role in prevention, early detection, and referral to specific care.

By joining the international CARDIO4Cities network from the Novartis Foundation as a pharmacists' association in Leuven, we aim to encourage pharmacists to improve cardiovascular health in urban areas through data-driven strategies.

The strategy includes population health management (PHM) and risk stratification. This approach divides the Leuven population into target groups according to cardiovascular risk, allowing pharmacists and other care providers to tailor their actions to each patient's needs.

Key actions for pharmacists include:

- Raising awareness about risk factors through daily patient interactions and taking specific actions, such as referral to a movement coach, smoking cessation support, or a tabaccologist.
- Focusing on early detection and awareness by creating a health corner in pharmacies where patients can measure blood pressure independently, including referral to a general practitioner when needed.
- Providing medication counselling and review focused on improving adherence among patients already on cardiovascular medication.
- Pharmacist-oriented digital education combined with medication guidance and follow-up for heart-failure patients to improve quality of care.

Impact: This initiative aims to increase awareness of cardiovascular risk factors such as smoking and high blood pressure. It also seeks to improve treatment adherence and self-management by promoting lifestyle changes like smoking cessation and increased physical activity. By focusing on early detection, patients are guided to earlier diagnosis and gain more control over their health, reducing cardiovascular disease risk.

Implications: This initiative demonstrates how integrated care can address cardiovascular risks in a data-driven, preventive way through an existing collaborative network. Earlier investments in relationships among primary and secondary care partners can be leveraged and expanded to new therapeutic areas using the same methods. CARDIO4Cities in Leuven illustrates a community-oriented approach where neighbourhood care teams provide a framework to tackle local health issues and further develop population health management.

References: (1) World Health Organization. Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) [Internet]. Genève: World Health Organization; 31 July 2025 [Cited on October 27 2025]. Available from: [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cardiovascular-diseases-\(cvds\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cardiovascular-diseases-(cvds))

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