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THE GROWING PROCESS IN THE PRACTICE OF PHARMACY AND THE NEED FOR A MODERN PHARMACY EDUCATION PROGRAM

Malini S¹, Pasupathi A²

1. Research Scholar, Vinayaka Mission Research Foundation (Deemed to be University), Salem, India.
2. Department of Pharmaceutics, Vinayaka Mission College of Pharmacy, Salem, India.

ABSTRACT

Pharmacy is one of the healthcare professions that have significant role to play in health care system. Pharmacists are academically qualified to become specialist in proper use of medications and therapy. As such, their function can evolve to include evaluating, educating and advising patients to maintain the appropriate use of medicine and to provide patients with pharmaceutical care treatments. According to recent systemic reviews, community pharmacist giving counseling services improved clinical outcomes. In some countries, it is mandated by law and regulation that to give the major priority for community pharmacist in modern health care system. Pharmaceutical care is the responsible provision of drug therapy for the purpose of achieving definite outcome which improve patient quality of life. It seems that there is a lack of accurate and scientific knowledge is one of the basic weakness of most community pharmacists leading to inappropriate practice, this can be overcome by training programs such as educational pamphlets and continuing educational seminars play important roles in increasing pharmacists' knowledge and therefore improves their performance in practice.

Keywords:

Pharmaceutical Care, Continuing Educational Programs, Pharmacy Practice, Community Pharmacist, Hospital Pharmacist.

Author for correspondence

Malini S

Research Scholar, Vinayaka Mission Research Foundation (Deemed to be University), Salem, Tamil Nadu, India.

Email id: tomaluktm@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

The world health organization and FIP are initiating all countries to develop and practice minimum standards in pharmacy practice¹. Pharmacy is one of the healthcare professions that have significant role to play in health care system.

Pharmacists are academically qualified to become specialist in proper use of medications and therapy. As such, their function can evolve to include evaluating, educating and advising patients to maintain the appropriate use of medicine and to provide patients with pharmaceutical care treatments². In addition to ensuring an adequate inventory of drugs, their clinical responsibilities also include patient care at the time of prescription or non – prescription drug delivery, drug information for health professionals, clinicians and general public, and involvement in health promotion programs.

The attitude of pharmacist towards professional practice is therefore very significant. Because of their easy accessibility, pharmacists are positioned at the first point of contact in the healthcare system³. As a result of advancement in pharmacy profession, the role of the pharmacist has changed from just compounding and dispensing to giving information on drugs and patient care. These whole arrays of patient care oriented services were described as pharmaceutical treatment, a revolution in the practice of pharmacy⁴. Pharmacist are providing interventions in community pharmacy and the care given by them are mainly relating to respond to new areas ie, patient's satisfaction in medication therapy and health related quality of life⁵. According to recent systemic reviews, community pharmacist giving counseling services improved clinical outcomes. In some countries, it is mandated by law and regulation that to give the major priority for community pharmacist in modern health care system⁶.

Evolution of practice of pharmacy:

Pharmaceutical education in India was first introduced in the year 1932 by Prof. M L Schroff at Banaras Hindu University⁷. Over the last decade, Pharmacy profession has changed from just compounding and dispensing drug to providing almost patient care and the term used for this is pharmaceutical care. In 1990, Hepler and Strand published the first useful definition of pharmaceutical care, they wrote "Pharmaceutical care is the responsible provision of drug therapy for the purpose of achieving definite outcome which improve patient quality of life⁸. The pharmacy professions are now a day has a rapid change in health delivery system and is experiencing significant growth and development. In 1992, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) has developed standards for the services provided by the pharmacy under the heading Good Pharmacy Practice in community as well as hospital pharmacy which were circulated in March 1993 to WHO. The FIP Congress held in 1993 in Tokyo adopted declaration on standards for quality of pharmacy services which is as follows: "Standards are an important part in the measurement of quality of pharmacy services to the consumer⁷.

Good Pharmacy Practice:

Good Pharmacy Practice (GPP) is at the heart of the profession of pharmacy, it has indeed become the profession. The GPP guidelines recommend that national standards are established for the promotion of health, the supply of medicines and medical devices, pharmaceutical care and the improvement of medical use through pharmacist involvement⁷. The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) is a global federation of national organizations that represent the pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists and its role is to provide leadership for national pharmaceutical organizations and encourage them to focus on pharmacists in the community pharmacy as well as hospital pharmacy for developing the elements of service they provide to meet changing circumstances⁹. FIP encourages pharmaceutical associations and governments to work together to develop acceptable standards or to revisit such standards of the guidelines set out in the GPP documents⁷. The FIP and WHO developed the concept of "Seven Star Pharmacist", which states that "a well rounded pharmacist should be a compassionate care giver, decision maker, active communicator, lifelong learner and good manager, possess good leadership qualities and have the ability to be a teacher and researcher"⁵. The basic concepts of Pharmaceutical Care and GPP are identical and similar as it says that the GPP is the way to implement Pharmaceutical Care¹⁰.

The mission of Pharmacy Practice:

It is to provide medication and other health care products and services to people and society. The pharmacist should keep themselves updated about the new developments and inventions in their profession. He must have an excellent communication skill and able to work closely with other health care professionals. And also they must maintain healthy relationship with other health providers¹⁰. Public interpretation about community Pharmacist as a health care professional is not clear. There is great need to generate awareness in the public about the role and responsibilities of pharmacist in the community health care system¹¹.

Continuing Educational Programs (CEP) is an internationally recommended way as it is lifelong learning model for pharmacist; activate them to maintain the necessary knowledge, skill and ethical attitudes so as to remain current and competent in their practice¹².

Pharmacy Practice in India:

Aligned with International standards, all the pharmacists of India are also expected to provide an array of professional services along with the traditional role, the dispensing. A standardized pharmaceutical care delivery across the country is therefore an ongoing challenge. In the past few years, there has been indicative evolution in pharmacy practice education, including new clinically oriented degree programs, and giving a special importance on patient care in pharmacy¹³. A role model within pharmacy practice strengthens the further development in professional values, attitude and behaviors. By maintain a high value in professionalism; pharmacy practice can confirm its value to all those who seeks to serve it¹⁴. There is an immediate need for comprehensive understanding of how the pharmacist can better develop and use practical decision making skills in the clinical pharmacy. The purpose of this commentary is to describe clinical decision making in pharmacy practice and to provide a model for clinical decision making that is consistent with a methodological context for pharmacy practice¹⁵.

Public perception and satisfaction:

Steps have to be taken to improve the services provided by clinical pharmacist and thereby improve the satisfaction of customers. Appropriate training and support should be given to pharmacist in order to improve their confidence in providing public health services. When pharmacist can be encouraged to deliver public health services more proactively, increased exposure to public health services is likely to have a positive effect on the general public's attitude and wellbeing¹⁴. The community pharmacy services are comparatively lower than those offering at hospitals due to inadequate policies. Community pharmacy services need a development¹⁶.

It seems that there is a lack of accurate and scientific knowledge is one of the basic weakness of most community pharmacists leading to inappropriate

practice, this can be overcome by training programs such as educational pamphlets and continuing educational seminars play important roles in increasing pharmacists' knowledge and therefore improves their performance in practice¹⁷. In addition to this, concerned authorities should focus in this matter and should make appropriate changes in this filed for strengthening pharmacy care services¹⁶.

Steps to be taken:

Average dispensing time should be increased so that there will be enough time for counseling each and every patient. The dispensing score methods can be useful for assessment of quality of dispensing and can be used as a tool for improving. Various studies show that dispensing scores of trained pharmacist are significantly higher than those of non pharmacists/pharmacy assistants. There for trained and well educated pharmacists should only be allowed for dispensing. Measures should be taken to improve the ability and quality of well qualified pharmacists in these services. Also Pharmacists should be aware of updating his knowledge by attending continuous education programs and seminars. By this the morals and responsibilities of a dispensing pharmacist is reminded to them.

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