

## All health professionals should embrace the concept of pharmaceutical care

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Modern pharmacy practice has moved away from the mere act of medicines supply and is now about managing patient care and ensuring that appropriate therapeutic outcomes are achieved when medicines are prescribed and dispensed. Managing medicines use processes in order to improve outcomes, including patients’ quality of life, is a concept better known as pharmaceutical care.

Pharmaceutical care is a professional activity in which a pharmacist, using his or her knowledge and experience, identifies a patient’s needs, sets priorities in the treatment process, monitors the patient throughout his or her medication journey and, ultimately, takes responsibility for outcomes of medicines use. This responsibility is shared with the prescriber (most often a medical doctor) who establishes the diagnosis and prescribes the initial therapy, and with the patient, who must be encouraged to take his or her part of the responsibility and adhere to the recommended therapy.

Pharmaceutical care derives from the principles and postulates of clinical pharmacy, which pharmacists recognise as the scientific basis for intervention in the treatment of patients. The concept of clinical pharmacy clarifies the role of pharmacists in the process of providing care. It involves different ways of cooperating with other health professionals, and the linking of science with practice for the benefit of the patient. To have the highest impact possible, however, it is necessary for pharmacists not only to have knowledge, but also to develop skills in communication, judgment and decision-making.

Clinical practice should occupy an increasing role in the daily work of pharmacists, rather than being exclusive to specialty pharmacists. Clinical pharmacy practice includes the philosophy of pharmaceutical care that is focused on specialised knowledge and experience of treatments. As a scientific discipline, clinical pharmacy includes the task of collecting and contributing to the creation of new knowledge that can improve the health and quality of life.

Pharmacists in Europe and in other parts of the world have developed a range of pharmaceutical care services that target different stages of the medication journey. It is based on firm evidence that specific treatment goals are associated with improved patient

outcomes. For instance, pharmacy services include:

- Performing a patient needs assessment;
- Initiating, adjusting or discontinuing treatment upon consultation with prescribers when necessary;
- Managing diseases, maximising outcomes of pharmacotherapy through medication use reviews and medication management;
- Performing, interpreting and monitoring laboratory test results;
- Providing follow-up services to support patients with chronic conditions.

In addition, a number of pharmacy services have been developed in response to the public health needs of communities and society at large. These include screening services and self-care services.

### **Break through the barriers**

Around the world, national pharmacy associations are trying to promote and incorporate pharmacy services in national health care systems, and although these moves are supported by strong evidence there are many challenges to overcome. Barriers include an insufficient number of pharmacists, inadequate pharmacy infrastructure, lack of available funding, restrictive legal frameworks (that limit the activities of pharmacists) and, sometimes, a lack of motivation from pharmacists themselves. Most importantly, for pharmacists to deliver effective, patient-needs-centred and efficient services, the collaboration of other health professionals involved in patient care is needed. Not surprisingly, one of the most often cited barriers for implementation of services is opposition and lack of support from other health professionals. It is important to support the professional interchange with all parties involved in the care of a patient in both secondary and primary care, so that patient needs are fully understood by all and so that services meeting those needs can be offered at the right point of care. Yet it is too often that pharmacists work with no direct contact with other health professionals.

This year's World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences will host a session dedicated to pharmaceutical care, in which participants will be able to learn about, among others, health screening to reduce the burden of disease, sustainable care for vulnerable patients and communicating evidence-based facts. This session will take the format of role plays of pharmacist-patient interactions with "teachers" helping participants to make decisions, demonstrating the role of community pharmacists in various disease treatments,

and — importantly — providing tools to break through barriers.

The delivery of a pharmaceutical care service to patients requires information on the population and its specific health risks, understanding of the main causes of poor outcomes, and methods for targeting patients and their needs. Part of implementation of any pharmacy service is the development of standard operating procedures, guidelines and protocols designed to address individual patients' pharmaceutical care needs.

Indicators for pharmaceutical care are equally appropriate for in-patient and community settings, for hospital and community pharmacists, and in Europe and other regions of the world. Indicators can provide information about the range, quantity and quality of pharmaceutical care interventions and services. The indicators can also provide an opportunity to gather in-depth knowledge on pharmaceutical care practices regionally, nationally and internationally, permitting the sharing and follow-up of experiences over time by pharmacists and the health sector in general. Such indicators, for example, as developed by the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines (an arm of the Council of Europe), are broad and can be further developed and refined over time, but they are generally easily understood and can help pharmacists, other healthcare providers, and professional regulators to formalise and develop the pharmaceutical care philosophy and its working methods. At the conclusion of the pharmaceutical care session at the congress, participants will be able to:

- Describe and explain various roles of pharmacists in assuring sustainable and affordable patient care;
- Identify how to make a personal learning plan to achieve quality in providing patient care;
- Describe ways to expand their scope of practice and embrace new roles; and
- Outline different patient needs and expectations.

Pharmaceutical care is provided for the direct benefit of the patient, and the pharmacist is accountable directly to that patient for the quality of that care. The fundamental of pharmaceutical care is mutually beneficial exchange in which the patient shares responsibility for his or her treatment outcomes with the provider (a pharmacist) and the provider provides the highest quality care and makes commitment to positive outcomes. These pharmaceutical care goals, processes and relationships exist regardless of practice setting and professional background.

*If you want to know more, please join us in Buenos Aires at the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) annual congress for session D2 on Thursday 1 September.*