

Introduction

Pharmacy practice is the discipline of pharmacy which involves developing the professional roles of pharmacists.

Pharmacy practice can refer to several fields of pharmaceutical profession such:

- Hospital pharmacy
- Community pharmacy
- Clinical pharmacy

In addition to many fields such as compounding pharmacy, pharmacy informatics, internet pharmacy... etc.

Community pharmacists are the most accessible healthcare professional. No appointment is needed to consult a pharmacist and patients can receive free, unbiased advice almost anywhere.

A community pharmacist is often the first health professional the patient seeks advice from and, as such, provides a filtering mechanism whereby minor self-limiting conditions can be appropriately treated with the correct medication and patients with more sinister pathology referred on to the GP for further investigation.

On a typical day a pharmacist practicing in an 'average' community pharmacy can realistically expect to help several patients a day who present with various symptoms for which they are seeking advice, reassurance, treatment or a combination of all three.

Current health policy in the Western countries of making more medicines available has promoted patient self-care, and with it a greater role for community pharmacists. The over-the-counter (OTC) medicines market has seen considerable growth over the last few years.



The role of the pharmacist

The consultancy agreed that contemporary and future pharmacists must possess specific knowledge attitudes, skills and behaviors in support of their roles.

WHO summarized these roles in "*the seven-star pharmacist*:"

❖ Care-giver

The pharmacist provides caring services. Whether these services are clinical, analytical, technological or regulatory, the pharmacist must be comfortable interacting with individuals and populations. The pharmacist must view his or her practice as integrated and continuous with those of the health care system and other pharmacists. Services must be of the highest quality.

❖ Decision-maker

The appropriate, efficacious and cost effective use of resources (e.g., personnel, medicines, chemicals, equipment, procedures, practices) should be at the foundation of the pharmacist's work. Achieving this goal requires the ability to evaluate, synthesize and decide upon the most appropriate course of action.

❖ Communicator

The pharmacist is in an ideal position between physician and patient. As such, he or she must be knowledgeable and confident while interacting with other health professionals and the public. Communication involves verbal, non-verbal, listening and writing skills.

❖ Leader

Whether the pharmacist finds him/herself in multidisciplinary (e.g., team) caring situations or in areas where other health care providers are in short supply or non-existent, he/she is obligated to assume a leadership position in the overall welfare of the community. Leadership involves compassion and empathy as well as the ability to make decisions, communicate, and manage effectively.

❖ Manager

The pharmacist must effectively manage resources (human, physical and fiscal) and information; he or she must also be comfortable being managed by others, whether an employer or the manager/leader of a health care team. More and more, information and its related technology will provide challenges to the pharmacist as he/she assumes greater responsibility for sharing information about medicines and related products.

❖ Life-long-learner

It is no longer possible to learn all one must learn in school in order to practice a career as a pharmacist. The concepts, principles and commitment to life-long learning must begin while attending pharmacy school and must be supported throughout the pharmacist's career. Pharmacists should learn how to learn.

❖ Teacher

The pharmacist has a responsibility to assist with the education and training of future generations of pharmacists. Participating as a teacher not only imparts knowledge to others, it offers an opportunity for the practitioner to gain new knowledge and to fine-tune existing skills.

An addendum to the seven-star pharmacist concept has resulted in the inclusion of two new criteria, thereby giving rise to the 'Nine-star pharmacist'. In addition to the seven roles, the inclusion of pharmacist as a researcher and an entrepreneur is quite significant.

❖ Researcher

Research is not just for academicians. A great deal of research takes place at grass roots level. Research findings can impact on all sectors of the pharmacy profession. A culture change is needed whereby pharmacists see research as a core part of their normal daily practice. There is a need for more practice research to help the profession meet its aspirations. Pharmacists need help and advice about how to get involved.

❖ Pharmapreneur or entrepreneur

An entrepreneur is 'a person who organizes and operates a business or businesses, taking on greater than normal financial risks in order to do so'. Entrepreneurs are usually viewed as individuals who take substantial risks to go out and start new companies.

The concept of 'Pharmapreneur' is still in its infancy because unfortunately, the mindset of almost all fully-registered pharmacists (and pharmacy graduates) is that their profession extends to only drug dispensing and its associated activities within a hospital or clinical setting. Most pharmacists go to work for entities that are already established, such as a community pharmacy or hospital. Such positions are generally considered safe, as they promise a steady paycheck and continued employment. For that reason, entrepreneurship is not commonly listed among a pharmacist's skill sets.

Drug Regulations

In UK, drugs are classified into:

- Prescription-only medicines (POM), which may be sold by a pharmacist if they are prescribed by a prescriber
- Pharmacy medicines (P), which may be sold by a pharmacist without a prescription
- General sales list (GSL) medicines, which may be sold without a prescription in any shop

In the USA, FDA requires OTC products to be labeled with an approved "Drug Facts" label to educate consumers about their medications.

Responding to a request for help

The following steps are required to help any person:

- Information gathering
- Decision making
- Treatment
- Outcome

Approaches to differential diagnosis

A *mnemonic* or an *acronym* is sometimes used by pharmacists to gather information to help them in diagnosing a patient's presenting complaint. Caution should be exercised when using a mnemonic or acronym due to the fact that it may fail to obtain all necessary information that is needed before diagnosing the patient's presenting complaint accurately and further questioning may be necessary depending on the patient's response to questions.

WWHAM

W	Who is the patient
W	What are the symptoms
H	How long have the symptoms been present
A	Action taken
M	Medication being taken

ASMETHOD

A	Age/appearance
S	Self or someone else
M	Medication
E	Extra medicines
T	Time persisting
H	History
O	Other symptoms
D	Danger symptoms

ENCORE

E	Explore
N	No medication
C	Care
O	Observe
R	Refer
E	Explain

SIT DOWN SIR

S	Site or location of a sign/symptom
I	Intensity or severity
T	Type or nature
D	Duration
O	Onset
W	With (other symptoms)
N	Annoyed or aggravated by
S	Spread or radiation
I	Incidence or frequency
R	Relieved by