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Clinical Pharmacist and Pharmaceutical Care



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ABSTRACT

Pharmacists are healthcare professionals who practice in the field of pharmacy focusing on safe and effective use of medicines. The role of pharmacist has expanded with many new responsibilities being passed on to him. This role has evolved in response to the societal need to improve the use of drugs and with the increase in number and complexity of the drugs being used in the therapy. The role of pharmacist has been expanded from the traditional compounding and dispensing of medication towards a more professional advisory and patient oriented health care role which are frequently referred to as clinical pharmacist¹.

Though the clinical pharmacy services provided by the clinical pharmacist is widely accepted and is very much in practice all around the world as an inevitable part of the healthcare system, yet some of the developing countries the role has not been well established. It is very unfortunate to say that significant proportions of healthcare professional don't understand how clinical pharmacist can contribute towards patient care. So it is very essential to address this gap by creating awareness among all healthcare professionals so that the patients will be benefitted to the maximum from the clinical pharmacy services.



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Pharmacists are healthcare professionals who practice in the field of pharmacy focusing on safe and effective use of medicines. The role of pharmacist has expanded with many new responsibilities being passed on to him. This role has evolved in response to the societal need to improve the use of drugs and with the increase in number and complexity of the drugs being used in the therapy. The role of pharmacist has been expanded from the traditional compounding and dispensing of medication towards a more professional advisory and patient oriented health care role which are frequently referred to as clinical pharmacist¹.

Clinical pharmacy is defined as the area of practice in which pharmacists provide patient care that optimises medication therapy and promotes health, wellness and disease prevention. The practice of clinical pharmacy embraces the concepts of both pharmaceutical care, first introduced by Hepler and Strand and medicines management, which encompasses the entire way in which medicines are selected, procured, delivered, prescribed, administered and reviewed to optimise the medical care².

Hepler and Strand's defined the concept of pharmaceutical care as 'the responsible provision of drug therapy for the purpose of achieving definite outcomes which improve the patient's quality of life'. It also includes pharmacist input in the design, implementation and monitoring of a therapeutic plan, in collaboration with the patient and other healthcare professionals, and helped to change the focus of clinical pharmacy activities from processes to therapeutic outcomes. The clinical pharmacist with an in-depth knowledge in pharmacotherapeutic and pathophysiology about the diseases and drugs works directly with the doctors, other healthcare professional and patients to ensure that the medications prescribed for the patients will enhance the outcome of the treatment. This specialized knowledge and clinical experience is usually gained through residency training and specialist board certification. Within the system of health care, clinical pharmacists are experts in the therapeutic use of medications. They routinely provide medication therapy evaluations and recommendations to patients and other health care professionals^{1,3}.

Clinical pharmacists are a primary source of scientifically valid information and advice regarding the safe, appropriate, and cost-effective use of medications³. They are also making themselves more readily available to the public. In the past, access to a clinical pharmacist was limited to hospitals, clinics, or educational institutions. However, clinical pharmacists are making

themselves available through a medication information hotline, and reviewing medication lists, all in an effort to prevent medication errors in the foreseeable future. They are also a primary source of valid scientific information and advice regarding the optimal pharmacotherapy⁴.

The benefits of including pharmacists as team members in collaborative care models have been clearly identified. Being a part of the integrated healthcare team clinical pharmacists takes the privileges in medication decision making functions by collaborating the doctors and other healthcare professionals. They can apply their knowledge and skills in the counselling and education of patients regarding the usage of drugs. Attention is drawn to the scientific impact of clinical pharmacist researchers by stating that they generate, disseminate, and apply new knowledge that contributes to enhance health care and quality of life.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLINICAL PHARMACIST⁵

- To review the clinical status of the patient in relation to specific diagnosis and to ensure that the medications prescribed are optimally meeting the patient's needs and goals of care on evidence based platform.
- Evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of the patient's medications.
- Identify drug related problems that could be improved or resolved by prompt intervention with appropriate medication therapy through concerned physician.
- Follow the patient's progress to determine the effects of adherence of the patient's medications on his or her health.
- Consulting medical practitioners and other health care providers in selecting the drug therapy that best meets the patient's needs and contributes effectively to the overall therapy goals.
- Advising patient about dosage schedule, possible side effects and other drug related allergies and report to the physician immediately when it occurs. Support the health care team's efforts to educate the patient on other important steps to improve or maintain health, such as physical activity, exercise, diet, and preventive steps like immunization.
- Referring patient to his or her doctor or other health professionals to address specific health, wellness, or social services concerns as they arise.

Though the clinical pharmacy services provided by the clinical pharmacist is widely accepted and is very much in practice all around the world as an inevitable part of the healthcare system, yet some of the developing countries the role has not been well established. It is very unfortunate to say that significant proportions of healthcare professional don't understand how clinical pharmacist can contribute towards patient care. So it would be more desirable if the clinical healthcare professionals could work in tandem with clinical pharmacist towards enhancing healthcare services to the maximum possible.

A UNIQUE PHARMACIST FOR A BETTER PATIENT CARE

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