

PATIENT COUNSELING: A CURRENT SCENARIO

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ABSTRACT

In the last three decades role of pharmacist has changed dramatically. Presently, the pharmacists are becoming more patient oriented than product oriented. Patient Counseling is the guidance provided to the patient by the pharmacist about the correct use of medicines. It is instructing the patient about various aspects of medicines like; how to take ,how long to take,what to avoid, precautions, common side effects, storage & any other relevant information about the illness. It has been shown patient counseling improve therapeutic outcomes.

Keywords: Patient Counseling, Patient compliance, Role of Pharmacist, Diabetes.

INTRODUCTION¹⁻⁵

Safe and effective drug therapy depends on patients being well-informed about their medication. Healthcare is provided in India at primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare level, and at each level most patients receive medication as part of their treatment due to heavy patient load, many prescribers have little time to explain the proper use of medication to their patient. Most pharmacist in community pharmacies and hospitals have not been educated and trained for this role, and have largely remained as prescription-fillers or dispensers. As a result many patients do not get enough information about use of their medication, including how and when to take the medication in the way that was intended, which in turn may result in therapeutic failure, adverse effects, additional expenditure on investigations and treatment or even hospitalization. Inappropriate use of antibiotic by individual patients may contribute to antibiotic resistance within the community in general. Many drug use problems and their consequences can be addressed by patient education.

In 1990s Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act specified some guidelines that pharmacist should follow while counseling patient: Name and description of the medication, dosage form and route of administration, special precautions for the preparation, administration or use of medication by the patient, common severe side effects, adverse effects, interactions and

contraindications that may be encountered, technique for self monitoring therapy, proper storage of the medication, prescription re-fills information, any action that should be taken in the event of a missed dose³. The information is usually given verbally, may be supplemented with written materials. Good communication skills and knowledge are needed to gain the patient's confidence and motivate the patient to adhere to the recommended regimen. But still there is no satisfactory counseling by the pharmacist in pharmacies and hospitals with very few evidences of separate counseling cabins. Pharmacist should have knowledge and skills to provide effective and accurate patient education and counseling.

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To obtain and sharing information with patient, effective open-ended questioning and active listening are essential skills. A separate room or space that ensures privacy and confidential communication with the patient that allows counseling and education to be conducted. Patient education and counseling usually occurs at the time prescriptions are dispensed but may also be provided as the separate service. Counseling concerning use of 'Generic

medicines' is today's need. In Indian set up nobody will do the things unless there is strict act to implement regulations to provide compulsory patient counseling and pharmaceutical care by qualified personnel. So, legal assistance is specifically important by enacting a law by the parliament. In Maharashtra, the Pharmacy Council also took steps to popularized the counseling activities in the community set up with initiation of 'Patient Counseling Course' for pharmacist and recently focusing it to an academic curriculum of the diploma in pharmacy. It has been shown patient counseling improve therapeutic outcomes.

Need^{6,7}

- ✓ A high level illiteracy, poverty and lack of awareness among patients.
- ✓ Lack of adequate drug information due to limited availability of literature poor documentation and poor funding.
- ✓ Patient non compliance towards the prescribed treatment.
- ✓ The widespread sale of prescription drugs over the counter.

Objective^{1,3,4}

- 1) Patient should recognize the importance of medication for his well being.
- 2) A working relationship and a foundation for continuous interaction and consultation should be established.
- 3) Patient understanding of strategies to deal with medication side effects and drug interactions should be improved.
- 4) Patient becomes an informed, efficient and active participant in disease treatment and self care management.
- 5) The pharmacist should be perceived as a professional who offers pharmaceutical care.
- 6) Drug interactions and adverse drug reactions should be prevented.

Benefits⁹

❖ To patient

1. Reduced errors in using medication
2. Reduced non compliance
3. Reduced adverse drug reactions
4. Reassurance that a medication is safe and effective
5. Additional explanations about their illness
6. Assistance with self-care
7. Referral for assistance with non-drug-related situation (e.g. family planning emotional problems.)
8. Reduction in health care costs to individual government and society.

❖ To pharmacist

1. Legal protection since pharmacist may be held accountable for injury resulting from insufficient information provided to the patient.
2. Maintenance of professional status as part of the health care team
3. Increased job satisfaction
4. Reduced job stress
5. As added service to attract customers and aid in market competition
6. Increased revenue through payment for counseling services and reduced loss resulting from unfilled or un-refilled prescription.

Patients counseled^{7,8}

❖ Patients who should always be counseled

1. Confused patients, and their caregivers
2. Patients who are sight or hearing impaired
3. Patients with poor literacy
4. Patients whose profile shows a change in medications or dosing
5. New patients, or those receiving a medication for the first time (transfer prescription)
6. Children, and parents receiving medication
7. Patients receiving medication with special storage requirements, complicated directions.

❖ Patients who should be counseled at certain intervals

1. Prescription, monitoring, aim to maximize drug efficiency, minimize drug toxicity and promote cost effectiveness
2. Therapeutic drug monitoring of drug with narrow therapeutic index
3. Drug information service
4. Patient Service
5. Improving patient compliance collecting past medical history.

Role of pharmacist⁹

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3. Drug information service
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CONCLUSION

Patient counseling is a part and parcel of good medication. Educating patients about the safe and effective use of their medications is a core responsibility for both hospital and communication skills. Patient counseling requires both therapeutic knowledge and good communication skills. Patient counseling aims to improve the safety and effectiveness of medications.

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