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Pharmacists as healthcare professionals

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SUMMARY

Already in the 13th century, the Jewish pharmacist **Abul Muná ibn Abí Nasr** described pharmacy, together with medicine, as the most noble sciences [1]. Pharmacists are qualified, university-educated healthcare professionals. At the same time, they are the final link in healthcare delivery who can control and guide the patient's treatment process [2]. The poster deals with the topic of the profession of pharmacist, perception of pharmacists by patients receiving pharmaceutical health care, and the role of the Slovak Chamber of Pharmacists.

INTRODUCTION

Since the middle of the 20th century there has been a change in the orientation of the pharmacy profession from its original focus on pharmaceuticals and drugs to a primary concern for patients needs [3]. In 1997, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** introduced the concept called “**Seven-star pharmacist**”. It includes 7 different roles of pharmacists: 1. **Care-giver**, 2. **Decision-maker**, 3. **Communicator**, 4. **Leader**, 5. **Manager**, 6. **Life-long learner**, 7. **Teacher**, (Fig. 1.) [4].

The significant part of the pharmacy care provided in the pharmacies is also provision of information and advice of the proper use of medications, of the expected effects of medications, of the possible interactions of concomitantly used medications, or medications and dietary components, of the proper storage of medication in the home, of the possible adverse effects of medications, and of the ways how to reporting suspected adverse effects to the **National Medicines Agency**. When providing information and advice, it is essential to observe the principles of proper **effective communication** between pharmacist and patient, to adapt the way of expression to the needs of a particular patient (e.g. elderly, patient with memory impairments, hearing, visual, speech), to use appropriate understandable expressions. At the same time, pharmacists should be patient, empathetic and strive to gain the patients' trust. Effective pharmacist-patient communication is essential to improve the safety of pharmacotherapy, increase patients' adherence to treatment, and increase patients' compliance with treatment [5].

The **Slovak Chamber of Pharmacists** (Fig. 2.) is an independent, non-political, self-governing professional organization that associates and represents almost 5 000 pharmacists in the territory of the Slovak Republic. It provides continuing education for pharmacists, publishing activities, professional, economic and legal advice to its members, and it is also involved in patients' education through its awareness-raising campaigns e.g. for seniors, pregnant, breastfeeding women, and children [6].



Fig. 2. Logo of the Slovak Chamber of Pharmacists



Fig. 1. WHO concept of “Seven-star pharmacist” [1]

According to our research, in which 110 patients participated all the interviewed patients considered pharmacist-patient communication in pharmacies to be important. According to the majority of respondents, it is important mainly because of the safety of pharmacotherapy. Almost all patients reported that the pharmacists working in pharmacies they visit are always helpful and communicative and the most respondents always received the information they needed to take their medicines correctly during the dispensing medicines at the pharmacy. More than half of the respondents did not know that pharmacists have a legal obligation to provide necessary information (use, storage of medicines) regarding proper pharmacotherapy when dispensing medicines. Most of the interviewed patients were given the information without asking the pharmacists to provide it. Participants considered the most important information they received from pharmacists at the time of dispensing: dosage of medicines, information about potential interactions, contraindications, information on the method of administration of the medicines, information on the potential side effects of medicines, and almost all respondents follow the advice and recommendations of pharmacists. More than half of the respondents stated that they prefer to consult with pharmacists when choosing a suitable medicine for self-medication, and almost all respondents consider pharmacists to be experts in the field of medicines. The majority of respondents found the pharmacist's advice helpful.

CONCLUSION

Pharmacists are healthcare professionals who could be characterised by good communication skills, patience, empathy, stress resistance and willingness to explain information among other qualities. Patients consider them to be experts in the field of medicines.

In the Slovak Republic, pharmacists are obliged under the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 362/2011 Coll. on Medicines and Medical Devices to provide expert advice on the correct pharmacotherapy during dispensing, which increases the safety of treatment and patient compliance.

An important part of communicating information to the patient is following the rules of effective communication focused on the needs of the individual patient and this skill must be learned by pharmacists throughout whole time in the healthcare profession.

LITERATURE

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