

A PAPER PRESENTED ON WORLD PHARMACISTS DAY 2018 IN AN EVENT ORGANIZED BY THE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF NIGERIA, KANO STATE BRANCH.

THEME: PHARMACISTS: YOUR MEDICINES EXPERTS!

SUBTHEME: DRUG INFORMATION CENTRE – A RESOURCE FOR EVIDENCE-BASED CARE

PROTOCOLS!

Introduction

Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria (PSN) is the umbrella body of over 20,000 pharmacists practicing in different aspects of health care delivery, academia and administration in Nigeria. PSN was founded in 1927 as the oldest professional body in Nigeria charged with the responsibilities among many of adherence of her members to the best ethical practices to the benefit of the health consuming populace of Nigeria. This health-consuming populace is constantly increasing.

The International Federation of Pharmacists (FIP) founded in 1912, of which PSN is a member. At their Congress that held in Istanbul, Turkey in 2009, the Turkish pharmacists suggested that a day be set aside to celebrate Pharmacists worldwide for their contributions to the health care delivery. It would also be used as a period to engage in advocacies towards improvement in service delivery across all the tiers of practice environment to the benefits of the citizenry. It was therefore agreed that September 25 every year should be used to celebrate pharmacists worldwide.

World Pharmacists Day has since been celebrated yearly as a platform to raise advocacy and public enlightenment with the aim of improving the quality of lives of the citizens with drugs/medicines.

FIP President Dr. Carmen Peña said, *“This year, we focus on the extensive expertise that pharmacists have and put to use every day to ensure better patient health. This*

expertise is applied through science and research, through educating the next generation, and through transforming patient needs into services.”

Pharmacists are dynamic, patient-oriented professionals committed to fulfilling the health care needs of their patients. The profession is one that is continually evolving and so as pharmacists, we have to move with the trend. The pharmacist is the most accessible healthcare professional (McGann, 2012). Medicines are the mainstay for the management of diseases and pharmacists are the custodians of medicines. This expertise in medicines makes us bosses of healthcare in our own right.

The Pharmacist is the only health professional who regular sees both sick and healthy clients. It has been voted as the most trustworthy profession in the world. “As men of honor, we join hands”.

There was a time people just filled their prescriptions and took drugs, no questions asked. Now, people want to know exactly what they are putting into their bodies and what effect it would have. And with easy access to the internet, we now have to compete with Pharm. Google. The role of the pharmacist has further evolved from provider, dispenser, procurer and distributor of medicines to that of healthcare educator. Pharmacists now focus on the individual patient by providing the following: Counselling; medicine information; disease prevention; monitoring of medicine therapy; supply of pharmaceutical services; provision of pharmaceutical care and dispensing of medicine whether on prescription or over-the-counter (FIP, 1998; SAPC, 2010; Wiedenmayer et al., 2006).

Areas of practice of Pharmacists

Pharmacy is a well-rounded profession. It combines science, healthcare, technology, patient care, business, administration, mathematics, education and research. It has numerous practice areas.

- Hospital pharmacy
- Community pharmacy

- Academia
- Regulation/Administration
- Industrial pharmacy

There are other specialized areas of practice like pharmacogenomics, nuclear pharmacy, compounding, drug information, forensic pharmacy, Veterinary pharmacy, hospice and critical care pharmacy.

In all these areas, the pharmacist plays various roles including ensuring optimum drug therapy, patient care, production and supply of drugs, discovery of new drugs but the unifying role is **the provision of drug information.**

Evidence-Based Practice

With the development of specific and potent synthetic drugs, the emphasis of the pharmacist's responsibility has moved substantially towards the utilization of scientific knowledge in the proper use of modern medicines and the protection of the public against dangers that are inherent in their use.

The most common definition of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) is from Dr. David Sackett. EBP is "the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of the individual patient. It means integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research." (Sackett et al., 1996) EBP is the integration of clinical expertise, patient values, and the best research evidence into the decision making process for patient care.

Steps in Evidence based Practice

ASSESS the patient - Start with the patient -- a clinical problem or question arises from the care of the patient

ASK the question - Construct a well-built clinical question derived from the case

ACQUIRE the evidence - Select the appropriate resource(s) and conduct a search

APPRAISE the evidence for its validity (closeness to the truth) and applicability (usefulness in clinical practice)

APPLY - talk with the patient and integrate that evidence with clinical expertise, patient preferences and apply it to practice

Self-evaluation - Evaluate your performance with this patient

Drug Information

The world is experiencing a drug and health information explosion and now more than ever, there is a need for the responsible provision of accurate, unbiased and up-to-date drug information. On paper, our education should make us the most qualified member of the healthcare team to provide drug information.

Drug information needs can vary based on areas of practice and the individual or professional needing the information. It could be drug identification requests, about side effects, managing over dosage, cautionary uses and contraindications, off label uses and patient-specific therapy.

Not all pharmacists can be trained as drug information specialists but every pharmacist should use their basic knowledge to answer questions regarding drug use, adverse drug events and incompatibilities. The specialist however would need to develop skills relating to the collection, retrieval, evaluation, storage, and dissemination of drug information. There would be a need for relevant academic mastery of pharmacology, therapeutics, pathophysiology and clinical pharmacy (Melton & Lai 2017).

Research carried out in the United States of America showed that the presence of a drug information center providing these services in 232 hospitals reduced total cost of care per hospital by \$5,226,128.22 ($p = 0.003$), including a \$391,604.94 reduction in drug costs per hospital, and was associated with a total of 10,463 fewer deaths.

Functions of a Drug Information Centre (FIP Pharmacy Information Section (2005))

The primary function of the drug information center is to respond to enquiries about medicines. Other functions include;

1. Drug evaluation - assess available drugs for their rational use.
2. Therapeutic advice – provide patient-specific information regarding drug use not limited to dosage adjustments, interactions, adverse drug effects.
3. Pharmaceutical advice - related to pharmaco-technological issues like cost, storage and stability.
4. Education and training – Capacity building and training workshops for pharmacists as well as provide information to the healthcare team and the public and disseminate such information.
5. Research – not limited to pharmaco-epidemiology e.g. drug utilization studies and pharmacovigilance.
6. Pharmacovigilance - monitor adverse drug reactions. Enquiries about a potential adverse reaction can lead to reports of suspected reactions and research may be required to assess the likelihood that a drug has contributed to a reaction or for subsequent patient management.
7. Toxicology - provide information and advice on the diagnosis and treatment of poisonings.

Role of the Pharmacist in Drug Information (Sridevi et al. 2017)

Apart from clinical knowledge and experience, practitioners in drug information centers need the following skills;

- Communication skills to receive and understand presented enquiries
- Knowledge of literature resources available
- Literature searching and analyzing skills
- Capacity for critical thinking and analysis of the enquires
- Writing and dissemination skills
- Ability to understand and summarize complex information.

The pharmacist should be able to;

- Communicate information about the services available.
- Respond to queries accordingly to the degree of urgency.
- Maintain a documented system for recording details of the query & enquirer.
- Maintain documents for recording various responses to queries.
- Records the queries & their response references.
- Store drug information service documents.
- Ensure the service is evaluated at regular intervals.
- Seek regular feedback from users to ensure that the drug information service has been provided in a timely and satisfactory manner.
- Perform quality assurance of the information which has provided for improved quality of service.

Problems

Education – On paper, pharmacists are well educated but we do not update our knowledge. You can't give what you don't have.

Communication – Knowledge needs to be communicated. Sometimes we don't provide the required information with confidence, other times the members of the health care team do not receive such information well.

Change – As dynamic as our profession is, we are quite Averse to change. We like to do things the way that they have always been done.

Manpower – It is inadequate and so we are overworked. Therefore, we do not have time to do what we know we should be doing.

Remuneration – It is poor and so there is no motivation

Solutions

Communication - There needs to be an open line of communication between pharmacist and other members of the healthcare team. As well, the patient and other members of the healthcare team need to be satisfied with the service offered by the pharmacist.

Education – Pharmacists need to equip themselves with the necessary ammunition - in this case the expertise of medicines which they have been trained in already. They should be up to date with new knowledge and advances in healthcare. It would also make us even more confident. This should go beyond the mandatory continuing professional development. Pharmacists need to identify where their own knowledge is lacking and come up with professional development plans to help them stay up-to-date with drug information

Innovation - Pharmacist need to seek, implement and embrace the innovations to the practice and use them to improve pharmacy services and potentially increase patient satisfaction and overall quality of life of patients. This would in turn, establish pharmacists as the true medicine experts that we are.

Realization - Pharmacists need to realize that being a pharmacist is enough. We don't have to have to be like doctors and diagnose and treat patients, to be recognized as experts. Medicines are still the major tool of health care and that is our terrain. We have two choices, to be first class medicine experts or second class medical doctors. I choose the former. What do you choose?

Conclusion

Like Jansen van Rensburg (2017) said, “Pharmacists can be active members of the healthcare team and restore their professional image in the eyes of their immediate community, if they renew their attitudes, have confidence in their abilities and understand their role in patient care. The community pharmacist should focus on the health-related quality of life of the individual patient and

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identify the immediate healthcare needs of their unique community, with specific reference to vulnerable populations like the elderly. Pharmacists should establish themselves as the go-to healthcare professional”.

Drug information is the birthright of pharmacists. We are the most easily accessible healthcare professionals and are the medicines expert. For a long time, we have been over-educated and under-utilized but that stops now. The world is finally ready for our expertise.

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