



Counseling Practices of Pharmacists at Medical Stores/Pharmacies in Karachi Pakistan

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Authors NS, MTB and AA designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors AS, AK and US managed the analyses of the study. Authors UB, BIA and SAK managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Dispensing medicines means delivering complete knowledge about the medicine being dispensed to that patient. Patient's counseling regarding their medications play a very important role to achieve the high efficacy and proper constancy on therapy. The aim of the study was to evaluate the counseling practices of pharmacist from customers' perspective.

Methodology: This was a descriptive cross sectional study, conducted among who were selected at random at pharmacies/ medical stores, while purchasing medications for them and/or for their loved ones. The study finally included 365 patients or attendants of the patients. The data obtained were analyzed using appropriate statistical analysis through SPSS version 25.

Results: 289 (81.37%) patients were counseled when they purchased antibiotics about the

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completion of the therapy and to take the doses timely. Only 4 patients were told about missing a dose.

Conclusion: There were different results of candidates majority of them were satisfied with on-going pharmacy service but some were not. Candidates also told about the lack of information given by the health care professional /pharmacist prior to dispensing.

Keywords: Patient counseling; community pharmacies; medical stores; dispensing; pharmacists; pharmacy practice; patient care.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dispensing medicines do not mean giving medicines only, but it includes delivering complete knowledge about the medicine being dispensed to that patient. Research has shown that the majority of the patients don't have knowledge regarding the use of their medication. As seen in Pakistan, where practically half of the nation is uneducated, unawareness and lack of proper patient counseling leads to the failure of positive treatment. Diagnosis and prescribing medicines is the job performed by doctors/physicians only however the majority of them do not consider counseling of patients as a part of their job. So the role of Pharmacists become more significant in such cases. Although, pharmacists are basic units of healthcare system. Unfortunately, their role in Pakistan is found to be very limited. Dispensing of medications gives pharmacists and their employees the chance to converse the medications with patients and consequently play a part, "to the treatment of individuals in order to enhance use of medicines and enhance health outcomes" [1,2].

Proper drug dispensing and counseling is a key component of pharmacy practice. The final link between the patient and medications are pharmacist. A good relationship between pharmacist and patient indicates good outcomes of medication on basis of rational drug use. Pharmacist should also educate patients regarding the name of medication, its frequency, side-effects, duration of treatment, drug food interactions, and drug – drug interactions. A good patient counseling by pharmacists also prevent the chance of adverse drug effects, therapy complications and also improve cost-effective therapy. It also increases patients' satisfaction with the treatment they are getting that eventually help patient to reach their target drug therapy and get maximum therapeutic outcomes [3].

Patient's counseling regarding their medications play a very important role to achieve the high

efficacy and proper constancy on therapy. Proper counseling while dispensing antibiotics is essential as they require a full completion of its course of therapy to achieve maximum outcomes otherwise the infection may revert back and it also increases antibiotic resistance [4,5]. Non adherence to the therapy a patient is getting may reduce pharmacotherapy outcomes [6]. Proper counseling of medication regimen increases adherence to the therapy as well as adherence play a great role in managing chronic diseases [7,8,9]. Therapeutic failure and adverse drug reaction occur due to non-compliance of patient to drug therapy. This is part of health care services especially professionals of pharmacy to counsel the patients and improve patients knowledge about medications [10] as proper counseling can increase patient compliance towards the therapy they are receiving [11].

It has been seen that it is possible for the pharmacists to identify and resolve drug related problems conveniently through patient counseling. Patient counseling also motivate the patients to comply with the drug therapy and increase their satisfaction level with pharmaceutical care [12]. Regardless of counseling being so important and beneficial to the society and health care system and pharmacist having a vast knowledge of medicines, it has been seen all over the world that the patients, the caregivers or the customers that are purchasing the medicines from the pharmacies have least interest in being counseled [13]. The aim of the study was to evaluate the counseling practices of pharmacist from customers' perspective.

2. METHODOLOGY

This was a descriptive cross sectional study, conducted among who were selected at random at pharmacies/ medical stores, while purchasing medications for themselves and/or for their patients. A self-administered questionnaire was developed and validated after a pilot study among 20 eligible customers. The questionnaire

was also peer reviewed and was validated by the team of experts and was proven to consist of satisfied content rationality. Cronbach alpha was calculated as 0.83. After modifications, the final questionnaire was comprised of 15 questions, out of which 2 questions were from demographics, 5 questions were related to the counseling service rendered by the pharmacists at medical stores/ community pharmacies, at the time of purchasing of medicines and the remaining questions were based on the evaluation of various components of counseling process satisfaction pattern using Likert Scale. The study was conducted from December 2020 to January 2021. The sample size for the study was 345 calculated from online source; Open Epi at 95% confidence level. For the safe side 365 participants from 40 pharmacies/ medical stores were included in this study. The data obtained were analyzed using appropriate statistical

analysis through SPSS version 25.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The pre validated self-administered questionnaire were received from 400 patients out of which 28 questionnaires were incomplete and 7 were from the age below 18 thus excluded from the study. The study finally included 365 patients or attendants of the patients. Table 1 shows that amongst the participants, majority were males (57.26%) and 61.87% of the participants were from age group of 41- 50 years. It is also exhibited that out of 365 patients 297 patients were told about when to take the medicine. 289 (81.37%) patients were counseled when they purchased antibiotics about the completion of the therapy and to take the doses timely. 20.3% patients did not ask any medical

Table 1. Practices of pharmacists at medical stores on basis of Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Key Performance Indicators	Responses of Participants		Total n
	Yes n (%)	No n (%)	
Correct time to take the medications	297(81.37)	68(18.63)	365
Counseled on missing a dose	4(1.10)	361(98.90)	365
Counseling while dispensing antibiotics	289(79.18)	76(20.82)	365
Preference of buying any alternative medicine that a pharmacist suggest if prescribed one is unavailable	250(68.49)	115(31.51)	365
Asking any medical related problems to the pharmacist in pharmacy	291(79.73)	74 (20.27)	365

Table 2. Detailing practices of pharmacists and responses of participants

Responses of participants	Very satisfied n (%)	Satisfied n (%)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied n (%)	Dissatisfied n (%)	Very Dissatisfied n (%)	Total n
Detailing practices of community pharmacists						
Attitude of pharmacy professional while supplying medicines	29(7.95)	23(6.30)	84(23.01)	174(47.67)	55(15.07)	365
Explanation regarding possible side effects	35(9.59)	42(11.51)	15(4.11)	19(5.21)	254(69.59)	365
Pharmacists' response to patients' queries	52(14.25)	27(7.40)	42(11.51)	31(8.49)	213(58.36)	365
Explanation given by the pharmacist on required medications	43(11.78)	25(6.85)	43(11.78)	226(61.92)	28(7.67)	365
Communication method of pharmacist or the	85(23.29)	95(26.03)	106(29.04)	54(14.79)	25(6.85)	365

Responses of participants	Very satisfied n (%)	Satisfied n (%)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied n (%)	Dissatisfied n (%)	Very Dissatisfied n (%)	Total n
Detailing practices of community pharmacists						
counseling person						
Pharmacists* feedback system to assure patients' understanding of medications	42(11.51)]	14(3.84)	35(9.59)	56(15.34)	218(59.73)	365
Guidance to use health appliances	90(24.66)	99(27.12)]	152(41.64)	19(5.21)	5(1.37)	365

related problems from a pharmacist in a pharmacy while 79.7% have asked them something at any point of dispensing (Table 1).

Table 2 shows that 47.67% of patients were dissatisfied about the attitude of pharmacy professionals at medical stores/ pharmacies while dispensing. It was also found that most of the patients (69.59%) were not informed about possible side effects and were very dissatisfied. Most of the patients (58.36 %) were very dissatisfied by the detailing of pharmacists at the time of buying medicines. 61.92% of the respondents showed dissatisfaction on the explanation given by the pharmacists. Half of the respondents were satisfied by the method of communication of pharmacists at regarding counseling methods. 75% of the respondents were not satisfied by the method/ steps to get feedback of medication understanding at the time of explaining prescription to the buyers.

4. CONCLUSION

The basic aim of this survey was to evaluate the patients' perception regarding practices of pharmacists at community pharmacies/ medical stores. The results showed that majority of the participants were satisfied with on-going pharmacy services but in some cases the results were different and vice versa. Candidates also told about the lack of information given by the health care professional /pharmacist prior to dispensing, they were not informed properly about the indication about the medicines to patients and also lacking to counsel them properly. As majority of candidates were satisfied with Medicine retail outlet services so it is now duty of health care professional to satisfy all the

minor problems of consumers too because the core of health care is what input they are putting and what patient is receiving.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

The study was approved by Ethics Review Committee (ERC) of Ziauddin University and Dr. Ziauddin Hospital with protocol no. 1970220NSPHA. Informed consent was obtained prior to the administration of questionnaire. Participants were also assured about the confidentiality of their identity.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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