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REVIEW

Evidence-based pharmaceutical care: The next chapter in pharmacy practice



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KEYWORDS

Evidence-based pharmacy;
Patient care;
Pharmacist;
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Abstract *Introduction:* Pharmacy is a very dynamic profession and the role of the pharmacist is improving with the expansion of the scope of services and the introduction of new subspecialties over time. Moving from being medication dispensers to outcome-oriented and patient-focused care providers; pharmacists will carry more responsibility and commitment to improve their knowledge and practice.

Being updated and evidence-based is a key tool to achieve effective pharmaceutical care services. The primary purpose of this article is to highlight the concept of “evidence based pharmaceutical care” as professional practice to improve the quality of pharmaceutical care.

Methods: Literature for relevant evidence was searched by Medline (through PubMed), Cochrane library using the keywords: pharmaceutical care, evidence-based and pharmacy practice. Also a manual search through major journals for articles referenced in those located through PubMed was done.

Results and discussion: There is strong data showing that pharmaceutical care lead to improvement in health outcomes and cost-effective therapy. More efforts, policies and qualified staff are needed to establish the “evidence-based pharmaceutical care” as new daily professional practice. Evidence to support pharmacists in their emerging role as care providers is available to improve the efficacy and quality of pharmaceutical care. Education and specialized training practicing evidence based approach are vital to prepare pharmacists to provide high quality pharmaceutical care.

Conclusion: As care providers, pharmacists are effective in providing high quality patient care and being members in multidisciplinary clinical teams is needed to give them the opportunity. Evidence based pharmaceutical care is a natural and logical emerging concept in the modern pharmacy practice to achieve high quality and more effective pharmaceutical care but still more efforts and resources are needed to promote new attitude toward more professional career.

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1. Introduction

Personal experience or expert opinion alone is not enough to support health care decision. High quality research is the most accurate source of scientific evidence that can be used to identify and meet the patient health needs. In a recent survey of pharmacists, 90% held positive attitudes toward evidence based practice and 84% thought research findings were important to daily practice (Burkiewicz and Zgarrick, 2005). These results reflect the awareness of the pharmacists toward their profession as evidence-based practice and the desire to expand their role as researchers.

Pharmacy profession has improved to include the provision of cognitive services in addition to the traditional role of medication dispensing. Establishing evidence-based practice is important for pharmaceutical care services to be effective, updated and relevant to patients. Pharmacists must accept and actively participate in the research needed to establish the required evidence-base pharmaceutical care.

1.1. What is “pharmaceutical care”?

According to the definition of Hepler & Strand pharmaceutical care is “the responsible provision of drug therapy for the purpose of achieving definite outcomes that improve a patient’s quality of life” (Hepler and Strand, 1990). Pharmaceutical care is based on a relationship between the patient and the health-care providers who accept responsibility to provide care to the patients. Pharmaceutical care involves the active participation of both the patient and the health care provider in drug therapy decisions.

Pharmaceutical care involves three major functions: identifying potential and actual drug related problems; resolving actual drug-related problems; and preventing drug related problems. Although there are different trends, such as clinical pharmacy services, cognitive services, medication management, medication review, they all share the same philosophy and objectives, namely “the responsible provision of drug therapy for the purpose of achieving definite outcomes

that improve a patient’s quality of life” (Roughead et al., 1990).

Pharmaceutical care activities include medication dispensing, providing drug information, patient counseling, drug monitoring, parenteral nutrition preparation, adverse drug reaction monitoring, medication reconciliation, drug protocol/guideline development, medical rounding with the health care team, and performing admission drug histories. Practicing these activities by evidence-based approach will improve the quality of the provided services.

Pharmacists need training and support to develop and improve their practical skills to provide comprehensive pharmaceutical care (Schommer and Cable, 1996).

To be effective, pharmaceutical care needs to be adopted by majority of pharmacists in their daily work. Many barriers limit the implementation of the pharmaceutical care principles. To identify and solve these barriers well designed research is needed (Farris and Kirking, 1993a,b).

1.2. Evidence based practice

There is an increasing awareness of the need for healthcare professionals to adopt an evidence-based approach to their daily practice. Practicing pharmacy in an evidence based manner will enhance professional skills of the pharmacist with improved patient care. The concept of evidence-based pharmaceutical care requires training and education starting from undergraduate level. Pharmacy students need to be educated how to professionally apply science in patient care. Special training on research principles, literature review and evidence based approaches is very important to prepare the pharmacists to practice the evidence based pharmaceutical care efficiently.

2. Methods

A literature review was performed by searching Medline database through PubMed for relevant articles including meta-analyses, systematic reviews, review articles, randomized and non-randomized trials, as well as case reports. Search

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