

## SHORT NOTE

### CONCEPT AND SCOPE OF COMMUNITY PHARMACY

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#### ABSTRACT

Recognition of the importance of a Pharmacist in the rational use of drugs has been slow but is growing. Public education in drug use is needed because without its recognition and proper utilization people lack the skills and knowledge which they require to make informed decisions about how to use drugs (including when they should not be used) and to understand the role of a Pharmacist and drugs in health care.

*'Doctors pour drugs of which they know little, to cure diseases of which they know less, into patients of whom they know nothing'.* Voltaire

Community pharmacists are the health professionals most accessible to the public. They supply medicines in accordance with a prescription or, when legally permitted, dispense them without a prescription. In addition to ensuring an accurate supply of appropriate products, their professional activities also cover counselling of patients at the time of dispensing of prescription and non-prescription drugs, drug information to health professionals, patients and the general public, and participation in health promotion programmes. They maintain links with other health professionals in primary health care.

Today, an increasingly wide range of new analogous products are used as medicinal, including high technology biological products and radiopharmaceuticals. There is also the heterogeneous group of medical devices, which includes some products analogous to medicines, some of which demand special knowledge with regard to their uses and risk of contra indication and adverse reactions. (e.g., dressings, wound management products, narcotics, psychotropics, hormones, vaccines, am then, antibiotics and anticancer etc.). Pharmacists have progressively undertaken the additional task of ensuring the quality of the products they supply.

The main activities of community pharmacists are described below:

*Processing of Prescriptions*

The pharmacist verifies the legality, safety and appropriateness of the prescription order, checks the patient medication record before dispensing the prescription (when such records are kept in the pharmacy). The community pharmacist also ensures that the quantities of medication are dispensed accurately, and decides whether the medication should be handed to the patient, with appropriate counselling. In many countries, the community pharmacist is in a unique position to be fully aware of the patient's past and current drug history administration and, consequently, can provide essential advice to the prescriber.

*Clinical Pharmacy/Care of Patients:*

The pharmacist seeks to collect and integrate information about the patient's drug history, clarify the patient's understanding of the intended dosage regimen and method of administration, and advises the patient of drug-related precautions, and in some countries, monitors and evaluates the therapeutic response. Pharmacist has always played a vital role in a therapeutic committee established for the proper health care system.

*Monitoring of Drug Utilization:*

The pharmacist can participate arrangements for monitoring the utilization of drugs, such as practice research projects, and schemes to analyze prescriptions for the monitoring of adverse drug reactions.

*Extemporaneous Preparation and Small-Scale Manufacture of Medicines:*

Pharmacists everywhere continue to prepare medicines in the pharmacy. This enables him to adapt the formulation of a medicine to the needs of an individual patient. New developments in drugs delivery systems may well extend the need for individually adapted medicines and thus increase the pharmacist's need to continue with pharmacy formulation. In some countries, developed and developing Pharmacists engage in the small scale manufacture of medicines which must accord with good manufacturing and distribution practice guideline.

*Traditional and Alternative Medicines:*

In some countries, pharmacists supply traditional medicines and dispense homeopathic prescriptions.

W.H.O. promotes the safe and effective use of traditional medicines. WHO's role is to assist those countries where traditional medicine is widely practiced to incorporate it into their national health systems and encourages their potential in health care system. It aims to enhance national programme development, operational research, clinical and scientific investigations, education and training.

*Responding to Symptoms of Minor Ailments:*

The pharmacist receives requests from members of the public for advice on a variety of symptoms and, when indicated, refers the inquiries to a medical practitioner. If the symptoms related to a self-limiting minor ailment, the pharmacist can supply a non-prescription medicine, with advice to consult a medical practitioner if the symptoms persist for more than a few days. Alternatively, the pharmacist may give advice to a patient without supplying medicine.

*Informing Health Care Professional and the Public:*

The pharmacist can compile and maintain information on all medicines, and particularly on newly introduced medicines, provide this information's necessary to other health care professional and to patients, and use it in promoting the rational use of drugs by providing advice and explanations to physicians and to members of the public.

*Health Promotion:*

The pharmacist can take part in health promotion campaigns, locally and nation-ally on a wide range of health-related topics, and particularly on drug-related topics (e.g., rational use of drugs, alcohol abuse, tobacco use, discouragement of drug use during pregnancy, organic solvent abuse, poison prevention) or topics concerned with other health problems (diarrhoea) diseases, tuberculosis, leprosy, HIV-infection/AIDS) and family planning. They may also take part in the education of local community groups in health promotion, and in campaigns on disease prevention, such as the Expanded Programme on Immunization, and malaria and blindness programmes.

*Agricultural and Veterinary Practice:*

Pharmacists supply animal medicines and medicated animal feeds. Supply information regarding safety, efficacy to veterinary doctor or public engaged with live stock or agriculture.

*Counselling:*

In a number of countries, the pharmacist provides advisory services as well as supply information to residential homes for the elderly, and other long-term patients. In some countries, policies are being developed under which pharmacists will visit certain categories of house-bound patients to provide the counseling service that the patients would have received, had they been unable to visit the pharmacy.

**References and Sources**

1. Report of a "W.H.O." consultative group, New Delhi, India, 1988.
2. Report of a "W.H.O." meeting Tokyo, Japan, 1993.
3. Essential Drugs monitor "World Health Organization", Geneva, Switzerland, 1994.