

The need to seek public opinion towards clinical pharmacists in Pakistan

Atta Abbas^{1,2,*}, Amna Shah³, Nabeel Khan²

1. Department of Pharmacy, Clifton Hospital, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
2. Department of Pharmacy, Health and Well Being, Faculty of Applied Sciences, University of Sunderland, England, United Kingdom
3. Faculty of Pharmacy, Ziauddin University, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan

***Corresponding author:** Atta Abbas, Advisory Board Member, Department of Pharmacy, Clifton Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan; Email: bg33bd@student.sunderland.ac.uk; Tel: 0092-321-2643077

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ABSTRACT

Clinical pharmacy services or pharmaceutical care is a health care service executed by clinical pharmacists which has always been a support in health promotion, disease state management and quality health deliverance. Pakistan's pharmacy development course started with the up gradation of the pharmacy curriculum which over the years has raised a second line of health care force along with physicians to counter illness in the country; the clinical pharmacists. Studies reported that the patients now recognize and acknowledge the role a clinical pharmacist plays in their treatment although their understanding is not that great. This brings us to the point that what the general public opines about them. This article puts a light on the said issue.

Keywords

Public opinion; clinical pharmacist; pharmacists; Pakistan

Abbreviations

HCPs = Health care professionals
CP = Clinical Pharmacists

1. INTRODUCTION

Clinical pharmacy services or pharmaceutical care in general have always been a supportive hand in the application of basic health sciences in any community. Pharmacy has always found itself as an adjunct to the medical science. The development of pharmacy practice in Pakistan

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started with the up gradation of the Bachelor of Pharmacy (*B.Pharm*) degree to Doctor of Pharmacy (*Pharm.D*) degree in 2005. In the course of up gradation of the curriculum, a number of allied health and patient oriented modules coined by the title of Clinical Pharmacy and Advanced Clinical Pharmacy were added in the degree program coupled with practical trainings in health care settings coined as clinical pharmacy clerkships (HEC Curriculum of Doctor of Pharmacy, 2011).

These were aimed at empowering the undergraduate pharmacy students to know and perform their duties well and also to create a public awareness about clinical pharmacist/ pharmacists, over the long run raise a second allied health care work force to support the crippling, financially starved and incapacitating health care system of the country which has been for long banked upon physicians as a sole work force. The move was successful in bringing the pharmacists in the health care lime light however encountered some resistant initially, as other health care professionals (HCPs) seemed unwelcoming to the inclusion of the idea. (Adnan S et al, 2014 and Abbas A; Khan N, 2014) But as time progressed the pharmacists' and the other HCPs became familiar and tolerant to each other and they acknowledge and applaud clinical pharmacists'/ pharmacists' role more openly. The patients now recognize and acknowledge their role in their treatment although their understanding is not that great. (Khan MU et al, 2013) This brings us to the point that what the general public opines about them.

2. DISCUSSION

The aim of a medical treatment is to benefit a patient, health wise. It accompanies additional benefits of economic saving, time and enhanced confidence in healthcare providers. The trio of physician, nurse and pharmacist, has proved its mettle to the general public in the developed countries. (Makowsky MJ, 2009) In a developing country like Pakistan, pharmacy as a profession has experienced rapid growth and is geared towards elevating the quality of healthcare services to be at par with those available globally. (Abbas A and Khan N, 2014)

The population of Pakistan is aptly knowledgeable regarding the role of a pharmacist, in general. (Khan MU et al, 2013) However, clinical pharmacist is a relatively new addition to the list of healthcare providers in Pakistan. The general public is at large, learning how a clinical pharmacist can prove beneficial in designing the treatment they receive. (Abbas A and Khan N, 2014) They expect a treatment which is accompanied by negligible adverse effects, improves their health in shortest possible time and does not leave a hole in their pockets.

To educate them on the inclusion of a clinical pharmacist in their treatment, it is vital to comprehend the multi-dimensional role of a clinical pharmacist. From a patient, the pharmacist shall solicit information regarding past medication and the current ones, if any. Evaluating laboratory test results and clinical assessment of the patient, a CP will be able to determine whether the medicines are prescribed rationally. Drugs with narrow therapeutic index, call for close monitoring by a CP. In event of an adverse drug reaction, the clinical pharmacist shall devise the best possible strategy to prevent, manage it and report it to the concerned authorities for future references.

The patient, who is at the receiving end of the treatment, where a clinical pharmacist is involved, reaps greater benefits, than the rest. In Pakistan, the general public is restricted by their limited financial resources to avail medical care. This is coupled by health sector of Pakistan which is monetarily constrained and is insufficient to fulfill the demands of an ailing but increasing population. (Gera, N, 2003) With acknowledgement by physicians across Pakistan, clinical pharmacist's involvement in healthcare will provide the patient with effective therapy. (Abbas A and Khan N, 2014) The highly prevalent practice of polypharmacy shall be curtailed, which in turn will relieve the patient and his care givers, monetarily. It will rescue the patient from the plight of adverse drug reactions arising from polypharmacy. (Abbas, A.; McGarry, K, 2014)

The patient and care givers receive adequate counseling regarding drug administration. Receiving a commendable healthcare service, the patient shall develop confidence in the abilities of a clinical pharmacist. The treated patient will recommend and encourage others to make the same choice for better health. Following laudable outcomes from the treatment, it will instill awareness in the care givers of the patient regarding the vitality of clinical pharmacist. It shall educate the general public about the possibilities of improved healthcare services with inclusion of a clinical pharmacist.

With influx/ inundation of clinical pharmacists in Pakistan as a member of healthcare team, tertiary care hospitals where they are employed, patients are gradually evolving to accept the involvement of a CP in their treatment.

3. CONCLUSION

It is the perception of the patients' care givers, which is yet to be determined, that holds utmost importance.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interests exists.

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