

PATIENT COUNSELING IN PHARMACY PRACTICE OPTIMIZATION OF DRUG THERAPY

INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES

Patients appear to have difficulties understanding their disease and the necessity for their drug treatment. Therefore they are reluctant to take their medications – partly because of doubts regarding the need for drug therapy, partly because of concerns about possible adverse effects of their medications. **Especially complex drug regimens may cause confusion and can be difficult to manage.**

Some pharmacists conduct planned consultations with patients in private rooms. In these consultations pharmacists review and evaluate the medication regimen.

During the consultation, patients ask questions and express concerns about their drug treatment. **Patient counseling therefore provides a framework to allow an in depth exploration of the patients' perspective, views and use of their medication as well as an opportunity to tailor information to the patients' needs and level of their understanding.**

In the Czech Republic, patient counseling services, perceived as a professional service with the goal to optimize patients' health-related quality of life and achieve positive clinical outcomes on one hand and economic expenditures on the other hand, are offered mainly by hospital pharmacies, particularly by four pharmacies, one of them providing such services since 1990. Provision of patient counseling is free of charge; health insurance companies do not cover the cost. **There are no obligatory rules or binding methodology** except the Recommended Procedures of the Czech Pharmaceutical Chamber.

The objective was to develop an effective methodology for educational courses that would allow the pharmacists to put the principles of patient counseling into pharmacy practice.

METHODS

Two facilitators (a pharmacist experienced in patient counseling and a communication specialist) lead one-day training sessions for community drug pharmacists.

Every course begins with an introduction outlining the necessary preconditions for conducting patient counseling services. Theory (a short station looking at a specific skill and clinical input), following the given consultation form, and practice are combined during the course. The majority of the course work is therefore interactive and experiential.

The given methodology actively engage the participants and provide them with the key elements of patient counseling (knowledge, systems for data collection/documentation, transfer of information, references, resources and equipment, communication skills, assessment procedures etc.).

RESULTS

The courses have been offered, within the PACE educational programs, since 2009 and have been conducted with the size limits of 15 – 20 participants per one course. **In the period from 2009 to 2010, 170 participants attended the courses.**

As a result of that more pharmacies nowadays offer patient counseling services. In practice, community pharmacies see patient counseling as a new and effective way of interaction with patients and call for more basic and follow-up courses. To address the need four new courses in the area of Health Coaching were developed in May through August 2012 to be taught in the 2nd half of 2012.

Students of the Faculty of Pharmacy of University of Veterinarian and Pharmaceutical Sciences in Brno, Czech Republic can choose, since March 2012, patient counseling as an optional course.

CONCLUSIONS

Community pharmacists play an important role in the patient-centred management of medication issues by patient counseling. Appropriately selected and used methods can motivate pharmacists to start with patient counseling and to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills. The whole process of drug therapy management requires an overall change in the traditional professional attitudes.

Pharmacist's communication style needs to be further developed into a more patient centred approach in order to get better understanding of patients perspectives and experiences in using their medication.

Motivation of pharmacists, by showing them the benefits of patient counseling and ways to avoid obstacles, is the key success factor. Documentation systems are vital for future reimbursement considerations.

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