

The Need of Social Pharmacy: Preparing Future Pharmacists for Practice Change

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The rapid changes in socio-economic, politics and information technology have forced the paradigm shift of pharmacy profession to meet the objectives and global needs. Today, the traditional role of pharmacists in compounding and dispensing medications is replaced by automated machineries and improved technologies. Additionally, the mushrooming of new medicines, ever escalating prices and increased drug use has resulted in medication-related problems. Therefore, since the early 1980s, efforts have been undertaken to identify the areas where pharmacists' skills and competence needed improvement. Among many recommendations, it was advocated that components from social and behavioural sciences must be incorporated into undergraduate pharmacy curriculum.^[1]

The idea gave birth to social pharmacy; defined as a discipline concerned with the behavioural sciences relevant to the utilisation of medicine by both consumers and healthcare professionals.^[2] Since then, social pharmacy became the bridge between clinical and fundamental knowledge that was taught to the pharmacist at the undergraduate level. Unfortunately and as expected, the addition of social pharmacy was welcomed in the developed nations. Even today, social pharmacy is not considered as a full equal to pharmacology, pharmaceuticals, chemistry and the other traditional sciences in the developing nations. On the contrary, social pharmacy is represented in the curricula of nearly all pharmacy faculties throughout Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada, Japan and in a growing number of countries in Central and South America.

So what is the reason of writing this editorial? As far as I see it, the very concept is still naive and less is known about social pharmacy in the developing nations. Therefore, it

is the need of time that our future undergraduates should know about the rational and importance of social pharmacy in their upcoming practice. As stated by Professor Albert Wertheimer and I quote, "*your clinical practice will soon be similar to the clinical practice of pharmacy seen all over the world today. But knowing about pharmacology and therapeutics, pathology and physiology, etc. is not enough*". Therefore, in order to have a distinct place among the healthcare triad, the future pharmacist must be able to interact, communicate, provide guidance and health education to cater the needs of both healthy and ill population. All these attributes must be seen and accepted as core competencies in the preparation of our future pharmacist, likewise we have standard competencies for other healthcare professionals. Once adopted, this will move our future pharmacist out of the traditional domains and will prepare them for a career shaping as a caregiver, able to help their society with their medication and health-related needs.

But preparing future pharmacist of the developing nation to adopt the new role is not that easy. To adopt the new role, future pharmacists should be well-trained in understanding patients' behaviour considering the fact that patients have their own beliefs and perspectives towards health and medication usage, which are important determinants of therapeutic outcomes. This is where social pharmacy can come into play. Behavioural sciences and health psychology are embedded in the foundation of social pharmacy; therefore, it is essential that this field must be taught to future pharmacy practitioners. Social Pharmacy is the interdisciplinary discipline that will enable the future pharmacists to act, take part and take responsibility in drug matters at the societal level. Being a fast developing discipline due to social demand, social pharmacy is likely to have a central position in the future curricula in pharmacy



schools. Therefore, this is high time that the importance of social pharmacy in pharmacy practice models should be highlighted to pharmacy students, educators, and other stakeholders in health care delivery.

CONCLUSION

Being a fast developing discipline due to social demand, social pharmacy is likely to have a central position in the future curricula in pharmacy schools. The importance of

social pharmacy in pharmacy practice models should be highlighted to pharmacy students, educators, and other stakeholders in health care delivery.

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