



**Short Communication**

**CHALLENGES TO HEALTHCARE AND THE PHARMACY PROFESSION**

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**ABSTRACT**

Pharmacists are society's experts on drugs. They have been at the interface between prescribers and patients for centuries. Pharmacists now have many varied new roles, sometimes called pharmaceutical care, to respond to the changing needs of the public, to changes in health care objectives, and to changes in health service delivery. The number of people requiring health care services has steadily increased, and this trend will likely continue. Due to many of society's changing social and health issues, pharmacists will face new challenge.

**KEY WORDS:** Pharmacist, Society Expert, Health Care, Challenge

**INTRODUCTION**

Pharmacy, as a profession has its own obstacles to face in trying to meet these challenges. Recruitment is a significant problem both in developed and developing countries in all fields. The total number of drugs is constantly increasing, and the cost of drugs for many illnesses is beyond the budget of huge numbers of payers, especially in developing countries. Countries struggle to make quality drugs

available and affordable, and this may mean seeking to achieve national self-reliance in pharmaceutical production, despite opposition from license holders. Elsewhere, community pharmacies are forced to rely on the sale of OTC medicines, due to opposition to separation of prescribing and supply from the medical profession. Primary health care has been recognized as the way to reach the WHO

'Health for All' target and the role of pharmacists in this context needs serious attention. Each country faces its own unique combination of assets and challenges<sup>1</sup>.

Pharmacists play a vital role in the health care system through the medicine and information they provide. Although responsibilities vary among the different areas of pharmacy practice, the bottom line is that pharmacists help patients get well. Pharmacists are drug experts ultimately concerned about their patients' health and wellness. The number of people requiring health care services has steadily increased, and this trend will likely continue. Due to many of society's changing social and health issues, pharmacists will face new challenges, including:

- Increases in average life span and the increased incidence of chronic diseases
- Increased complexity, number, and sophistication of medications and related products and devices
- Increased emphasis on primary and preventive health services, home health care, and long-term care
- Concerns about improving patients' access to health care while controlling costs and assuring quality.

In the 20th century, in all parts of the world, priorities and challenges facing pharmacy and healthcare in general have changed considerably. The World Health Organisation estimates that by 2020, leading causes of the burden of diseases are likely to be ischemic heart disease, depression and road traffic accidents, while health trends are likely to be dominated by four factors: the ageing of the world's population, the unfolding of the HIV epidemic, the epidemic of tobacco-related mortality and disability and the expected decline in childhood mortality from infectious diseases<sup>2</sup>. As noted by the former President of the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association, the pharmacy profession should be concerned with these issues. It should be concerned that "about a third of the world's population still lacked access to essential drugs, that about half a billion persons contract malaria every year, and that one million people would die this year (1999) from tuberculosis because of drug-related problems, for which pharmacists should assume responsibility<sup>3</sup>.

- Professional bodies must take responsibility for the education of their members Student Responsibility
- Students must recognise that the quality of their education is

dependent on previous improvements and it is their duty therefore to work for further benefits for the next generation.

- The quality of professional practice must be unquestionable.

### **THE PHARMACIST AS A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER**

Pharmacy is the health profession that links the health sciences with the basic sciences; it is committed to ensuring the safe and effective use of medication<sup>4</sup>. Pharmacists' professional roles and responsibilities have evolved historically from a focus on medication compounding and dispensing to extended pharmaceutical care services<sup>5</sup>.

An increase in health demands, with a complex range of chronic medicines and poor adherence to prescribed medicines, has forced pharmacists to take a patient-centered approach<sup>6</sup>. The paradigm shift for pharmacy practice took turn in 1990, when Hepler and Strand introduced the term "pharmaceutical care"<sup>7</sup>. Over the last few decades, pharmacy organizations and academic training programmes around the world have promoted pharmaceutical care as a philosophy and standard of provision of care for patients<sup>8</sup>. In essence, the pharmaceutical care concept has

more accountable in patient care, especially to ensure that a patient achieves positive outcomes from drug therapy<sup>9</sup>.

In many parts of the world, pharmacists have played a significant role in provision of pharmaceutical care services. In addition, it is also widely believed that pharmacists can make a great contribution to the provision of the primary health care, especially in developing countries<sup>10,11</sup>. Their role varies in different parts of the world: some deal with the preparation and supply of medicines, while some focus on sharing pharmaceutical expertise with doctors, nurses and patients<sup>12</sup>.

### **CONCLUSION**

The current era of globalization has witnessed evolution in the professions of the health sector, especially in pharmacy. Whereas previously the pharmacist worldwide was seen as responsible primarily for manufacturing and supplying medicines, today the pharmacist's role has evolved towards a clinical orientation. The profession is still under continuous transition.

With change in the health demands, pharmacists have a further role to play in patient care.

The precise role of a pharmacist in the health setting is altering and varies significantly from country to country. In contrast to the developed world, pharmacists in developing countries are not fully executing their potential role. They are still struggling for the recognition of their role that can help improve the health care system.

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