

Pharmacists' role has evolved over decades

As American Pharmacists Month draws to a close, it is time to stop and reflect on how the pharmacy profession has impacted health care in America. Together with the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), pharmacists across the nation have unified under the banner, "Know your medicine-Know your pharmacist," during October to increase public awareness about the pharmacy profession. These medical professionals act as guides to their patients in achieving better health care for life through education, disease prevention, medication therapy management, and building life-long relationships. Over the years, the pharmacy profession has changed with the needs of the patient but still is reputed as one of the most trusted professions. It is through this trust with their pharmacist that patients can develop a better knowledge of their medications and thereby achieve a better quality of life.

Transforming Health Care to Patient-Centered Care

APhA is the oldest and the largest pharmacy organization in the world with over 60,000 members representing all the specialized practice settings available. Established in 1852, APhA has been in the forefront of transforming the delivery of health care. APhA's efforts have not only influenced health care policy but have championed pharmacists as stewards of public health. For example, APhA and the National Association of Chain Drug Stores launched the nation's first Medication Safety Self-Assessment for Community Pharmacy to truly make America's pharmacies safe and efficient. Further, APhA has made disease prevention and health promotion a priority through its research and education.

These efforts have allowed pharmacists the resources to ensure the safe and proper use of medications and to deliver quality care to their patients. It is the pharmacist's solemn duty to empower patients with medication knowledge so patients can assume responsibility for their own health and well-being.

Thus empowered, the pharmacists establish the patient as the center of the health care team.

Progression of the Profession

The pharmacists' function as a health care provider has drastically evolved over the past few decades. Traditionally, pharmacists



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have primarily dispensed medication. Today, 48 states have passed legislation to allow pharmacists to administer immunizations for diseases such as influenza and pneumonia. Also, more and more pharmacists are stepping away from purely medication dispensing roles into medication management roles. Many pharmacists are specially trained to manage diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, anti-coagulation and chronic pain. These highly-trained pharmacists not only assist the prescriber in drug therapy management but also allow the prescriber to focus on other aspects of the patient's care. So do not be surprised during future clinic visits if you talk to a pharmacist on how to effectively and safely manage your medications.

Just Ask

After your next visit to your physician, take the time to talk to your pharmacist. You may be surprised at the impact your pharmacist has on your health care.

They are one of the most accessible health care providers. Pharmacists are your best source for free drug information not only for prescription but over-the-counter medications as well. Ask your pharmacist regarding self-medication of any ailment. They may also provide supplement and alternative medicine advice.

Although October is American Pharmacists Month, it should not be the only time to familiarize yourself with your pharmacist. This is a relationship which is cultivated and used as a guide to better health care for life. And remember, when it comes to your health, "Know your medicine- Know your pharmacist."

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