

A Newbie in Community Pharmacy Practice (NCP) – Concerns and Considerations

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Abstract

A pharmacist in general and community pharmacist in specific is a key member of the “healthcare team” involved in achieving a common objective of better healthcare provision. The emergence of “community pharmacy” during post-world war-II era, with a known motto of “drug control” and “patient oriented practice” (POP) came in to existence. The modern pharmacy practices, are not devoid of obstacles and challenges specifically for “Newbie Community Pharmacist (NCP)”, who comes in to direct patient contact at root level, thus necessitates to strict to standards which will help not only in quality care provision but will enhance the abilities of the pharmacist to cope challenges facing at community level. Herein, we will discuss some of the concerns for NCP and their considerations to deal with.

Keywords: healthcare provision, community pharmacy, patient oriented practice, drug control.

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OVERVIEW

Pharmacists play an important role in ensuring that patients receive safe and effective pharmaceutical therapy in the community environment. Transitioning from an academic context to a professional atmosphere, on the other hand, can be difficult for new community pharmacists. In this paper, we will look at the concerns and considerations of new community pharmacists, with an emphasis on the difficulties they experience on a daily basis.

One of the most approachable and often used front-line healthcare facilities is the pharmacy and community pharmacist. The role of Community Pharmacists in healthcare delivery is significant and growing, particularly as healthcare systems around the world increasingly recognize the value of utilizing pharmacists to optimize medication use and improve patient outcomes. The community pharmacist is often the first point of contact for patients seeking advice regarding over-the-counter medications, prescription drugs, and general health concerns.

The recent shift of “product centric” approach to “patient centric” model (Gordon *et al.*, 2018) magnifies their importance in providing services, such as referrals to health services, educating patients. For the

general public, the function of a community pharmacy has grown in importance, particularly for those who have numerous chronic diseases and complicated medication regimens, (Joyce *et al.*, 2007) as the aged population with chronic diseases is one of the big challenges for developed countries and rarely for underdeveloped communities. The health care system has greatly expanded the function of pharmacists to include pharmacological treatment (Hepler & Strand, 1990). The industry is no longer product-focused, instead it changed to a lot of patients-focused. Through patient assessment, disease management, appropriate consultation, and follow-up, therapeutic outcomes can be greatly improved.

Despite the importance of their role, community pharmacists specifically a “newbie”, face numerous challenges in their early career. Herein, we will discuss some of the key concerns facing “Newbie Community Pharmacists” (NCP), defined as those who are newly graduated or recently employed in the field and how to overcome these challenges.

Concerns encountered by a “Newbie Community Pharmacist” (NCP) include but not limited to:

Lack of Experience and Confidence:

Lack of experience and confidence in one's abilities is one of the key concerns of new community pharmacists. As recent grads, they may be overwhelmed by the complexities of pharmaceutical therapy and the wide range of patients they may encounter. In a study conducted by Makowsky *et al.*, (2009), new pharmacists acknowledged feeling unprepared to handle the responsibilities of their new position. They voiced reservations about their abilities to give pharmaceutical counseling and manage complicated medication regimens.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Providing new graduates with additional training and support to help them enhance their skills and confidence (Makowsky *et al.*, 2009)
- Mentorship programs are available to assist novice pharmacists in navigating the transition to the professional setting (Makowsky *et al.*, 2009).
- Encourage open communication and collaboration among pharmaceutical team members to foster a supportive work atmosphere (Nagappa *et al.*, 2017).

Understanding the Complexities of the Healthcare System:

Newbie community pharmacists must understand the complexities of the healthcare system, including the roles of different healthcare providers, the regulations and laws governing the practice of pharmacy, and the reimbursement systems for medications. The challenges faced by a NCP in respect to healthcare complexities include;

- Understanding the different types of insurance coverage and reimbursement policies.
- Keeping up with the ever-changing regulations and laws related to the healthcare system.
- Developing relationships with other healthcare professionals and organizations.
- Understanding the different types of medical billing and coding systems.
- Developing an understanding of the different types of medical records and their uses.

Considerations

- Gain a thorough understanding of the healthcare system: Spend the necessary time learning about its complexity. Learn about the various categories of healthcare providers, the functions they perform, and the rules that apply to them.
- Create connections with other healthcare professionals: Develop connections with other healthcare professionals in the region of concern. You will gain a better understanding of the healthcare system's operation thanks to this.

- Utilize available resources: Make use of the resources at hand: Utilize the resources that are offered, such as conferences, seminars, and online courses. These can aid in your understanding of how the healthcare system functions.
- Ask questions: Enquire about their experiences with the healthcare system from your coworkers, other medical professionals, and even patients. This can aid in improving system comprehension.
- Keep updated: Follow the most recent advancements in the medical field. By doing so, you'll be able to stay informed and be ready for any changes that might take place.

For a NCP, Comprehending the complexity of the healthcare system necessitates a thorough grasp of the key players and how they interact, as well as the capacity to foresee and adjust to change as the sector develops.

Difficult Customers/Consumer:

A difficult customer for a newbie community pharmacist is someone who is demanding, impatient, and uncooperative. They may be unwilling to listen to the pharmacist's advice or instructions, and may be argumentative or confrontational. They may also be unwilling to provide necessary information or follow instructions, and may be unwilling to accept the pharmacist's professional opinion.

Considerations

To overcome this challenge, the newbie community pharmacist should take the time to educate themselves on the medications and instructions they are providing to the consumer. They should also be patient and take the time to explain the medications and instructions in a way that the consumer can understand. Additionally, the pharmacist should be willing to answer any questions the consumer may have and provide additional resources if needed. Finally, the pharmacist should be willing to refer the consumer to a specialist if needed.

- Remain Calm: When working with a challenging client, it's critical to maintain composure and professionalism. This will make it easier to maintain attention and reason logically about how to approach the circumstance.
- Listen carefully: Pay close attention to the customer's concerns and strive to comprehend them. Ask inquiries to shed light on any misunderstandings and demonstrate that you are considering their issues.
- Offer Solutions: After comprehending the customer's worries, the NCP should present options that take into account their requirements. Make sure to detail each

solution's advantages and how it will benefit them.

- Follow Up: Confirm that the customer's needs have been addressed by getting in touch with them again after the initial engagement. This will demonstrate their dedication to offering quality service to the customer.

Dispensing Errors:

Another source of concern for new community pharmacists is the possibility of medication errors. Medication errors are a serious problem at community pharmacies, according to research by Flynn *et al.*, (2014), with up to 21% of prescriptions containing errors. Because of their lack of expertise, new pharmacists may feel more vulnerable to drug errors. They may be concerned about the consequences of such blunders, such as patient injury and legal ramifications.

Dispensing errors by a newbie pharmacist can be a major problem in the pharmacy setting. These errors can range from incorrect dosages to incorrect medications being dispensed. Newbie pharmacists may not be aware of the potential risks associated with dispensing errors, and may not be aware of the proper procedures for dispensing medications.

To reduce the risk of dispensing errors, newbie pharmacists should be properly trained in the proper procedures for dispensing medications. This includes understanding the different types of medications, their indications, and the proper dosages. Additionally, pharmacists should be aware of the potential risks associated with dispensing errors, such as incorrect dosages or incorrect medications being dispensed.

Newbie pharmacists should also be aware of the importance of double-checking their work. This includes double-checking the medication name, dosage, and patient information to ensure accuracy. Additionally, pharmacists should be aware of the potential for drug interactions and should be familiar with the drug interaction database.

Finally, newbie pharmacists should be aware of the importance of communication with other healthcare professionals. This includes communicating with the patient's physician or other healthcare providers to ensure that the correct medications are being dispensed. Additionally, pharmacists should be aware of the importance of reporting any dispensing errors to the appropriate authorities.

Considerations:

- To lessen the risk of drug errors, automated prescribing and dispensing systems are being implemented (Flynn *et al.*, 2014).
- Developing procedures for pharmaceutical therapy management and counseling to ensure practice consistency (Nagappa *et al.*, 2017).

- Providing continuing drug safety education and training to improve awareness and best practices (Flynn *et al.*, 2014)
- Check for drug interactions before dispensing a medication.
- Ensure to avoid the wrong medication or wrong dosage.
- Ensure proper patients counseling on the correct use of their medication.
- Make sure that the patient has no contraindications before dispensing a medication.
- Try not to dispense expired medication, check for the dates.
- Properly identify the patient before dispensing a medication.
- Ensure that the pharmacist is properly trained and certified. Make sure that the pharmacist is familiar with the medications they are dispensing and understands the proper dosage and instructions for each medication.
- Implement a double-check system. Have another pharmacist or technician double-check the medications that are being dispensed to ensure accuracy.
- Utilize technology. Use automated dispensing systems and barcode scanning to reduce the risk of errors.
- Educate patients. Make sure that patients are aware of the medications they are taking and the proper dosage and instructions for each medication.
- Establish a system of checks and balances. Have a system in place to review and audit the dispensing process to ensure accuracy.
- Utilize a pharmacy technician. Have a pharmacy technician available to assist the pharmacist with the dispensing process.
- Utilize a pharmacist-in-charge. Have a pharmacist-in-charge available to review and approve all medications that are being dispensed.
- Utilize a quality assurance program. Have a quality assurance program in place to review and audit the dispensing process to ensure accuracy and safety.

By following these guidelines, newbie community pharmacists can reduce the risk of dispensing errors and ensure that the medications they dispense are safe and effective.

Customer Satisfaction

One way to define satisfaction is the extent to which one's needs and wants are sufficiently satisfied (Kevrekidis *et al.*, 2018). High patient satisfaction levels show that community pharmacies are doing their duties effectively, but low patient satisfaction rates could result in a loss of customers since dissatisfied patients may be

reluctant to return. On the other side, low levels of satisfaction may serve as a catalyst for pharmacists to enhance several facets of patient services (Al-Arifi, 2012).. Studies show that higher patient satisfaction has a positive impact on patients' adherence to their medicine (Schommer & Kucukarslan 1997; Dang *et al.*, 2013).

Considerations

- Build positive relationships: A community pharmacists need to make sure they are building good relationships with their customers. A warm greeting, listening to complaints, and showing genuine empathy and consideration for health concerns builds a bond of trust and increases customer satisfaction.
- Offer personal advice: Community pharmacists have extensive knowledge of the medicines they dispense. They can improve customer satisfaction by giving their customers personalized advice. For example, pharmacists can provide information about drug intake, doses, and possible side effects. They can also recommend over-the-counter medications for common ailments and advise on healthy lifestyle choices.
- Collaborate with other health care providers: Community pharmacists can collaborate with other health care providers such as doctors and nurses. This can improve the quality of care provided to customers and improve their overall satisfaction. Pharmacists may share information with other health care providers about a patient's medication history, allergies, and other relevant health information.
- Improved accessibility: One of the main reasons customers choose community pharmacies is their accessibility. Community pharmacists can improve accessibility by offering extended opening hours, delivery services, and online recharge options. This can give customers quick and easy access to the medicines they need, which can improve their satisfaction.
- Provide excellent customer service: Providing outstanding customer service is key to enhancing customer satisfaction. Pharmacists can achieve this by remaining friendly, helpful, polite and professional. They can also ensure a positive customer experience by addressing any issues or concerns quickly and efficiently.

Overall, community pharmacists can improve customer satisfaction by building strong relationships with their customers, providing personalized advice, collaborating with service providers, and more. Other healthcare services, improve accessibility, and provide excellent customer service.

Productivity Targets:

The pressure to fulfill performance metrics and productivity targets is a third source of anxiety for new community pharmacists. Many community pharmacies require pharmacists to fill a particular number of prescriptions per day as well as give medication advice within a certain time range. This stress can be especially difficult for new pharmacists who are still learning how to manage their time effectively and offer outstanding patient care.

Considerations:

- Prioritizing patient care over production measures in order to improve care quality (Nagappa & Chetty, 2017).
- Adding more personnel or assistance to help manage workload and time restrictions⁴.
- Encourage non-pharmacist responsibilities to be delegated to support employees so that pharmacists can focus on patient care Nagappa & Chetty, 2017).
- Ensure proper time management.
- Encourage time management workshops.

Interpersonal Communication:

Novice community pharmacists may also struggle with interpersonal communication, especially with patients who have complicated medical histories or are reluctant to engage. In a study conducted by Peterson *et al.*, (2018), rookie pharmacists reported concern about their capacity to successfully communicate with patients and create rapport.

Considerations:

- Providing more communication and patient-centered care training (Peterson *et al.*, 2018)
- To create rapport with patients, encourage active listening and empathy (Peterson *et al.*, 2018).
- Use of teach-back approaches to ensure patient comprehension of pharmaceutical instructions (Nagappa & Chetty, 2017).
- Improve communication skills, ensure continuous education on communication skills.
- Active listening: Active listening enhances communication through nonverbal cues (Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson, 2000).
- Empathy and compassion: Empathy and compassion enhance trust and relationships in patients and coworkers (Hojat *et al.*, 2011).
- Clear and concise communication: Clear, concise communication enhances comprehension by avoiding jargon and tailoring to audience knowledge levels (Street, Makoul, Arora, & Epstein, 2009).
- Clarification questions: Open-ended clarification questions improve communication and understanding (Roter & Hall, 2006).

- Conflict resolution: Developing conflict resolution skills improves professional navigating disagreements (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974).
- Continuous learning opportunities: Continuous learning opportunities enhance communication skills development (Kurtz, Silverman, & Draper, 2016).

Time Management:

Another problem for new community pharmacists is successfully managing their workload and time. Novice pharmacists may find it difficult to balance competing demands such as prescription delivery, medication counseling, and administrative chores.

Considerations:

- Providing additional time management and prioritization training (Makowsky, 2007).
- Promoting the importance of patient care over administrative activities Nagappa & Chetty, 2017).
- Using technology to expedite dispensing operations and free up time for patient care, such as automated dispensing systems (Flynn *et al.*, 2014).
- Prioritize tasks by creating a daily to-do list, ranking high-priority tasks first.
- Set attainable goals to reduce overwhelm and improve planning.
- Utilize a planner or scheduling tool to manage tasks, deadlines, appointments, and meetings, ensuring timely completion.
- Create a disciplined routine by allotting specific time blocks for specific tasks, such as distributing prescriptions, patient consultations, and administrative tasks.
- Delegate tasks when necessary, freeing up time for more critical responsibilities.
- Avoid multitasking, as it can lead to lost productivity and errors. Focus on one activity at a time, finish it, and move on to the next to improve concentration and job quality.

Professionalism:

Maintaining a professional tone and resolving confrontations with other healthcare providers or patients may also be difficult for new community pharmacists. However it can be improved by considering strategies.

Considerations:

- Providing additional professional and conflict resolution training (Makowsky, 2007).
- Promoting open communication and collaboration with other healthcare providers (Nagappa & Chetty, 2017).
- Using a patient-centered strategy to resolve patient disagreements (Peterson, 2018).

- Ethical behavior: Maintain ethical standards in professional dealings, including patient confidentiality (American Pharmacists Association, 2019).
- Professional look: Maintain a professional appearance by following dress code, maintaining hygiene.
- Effective communication: Improve communication skills for effective patient, coworker, and healthcare interactions (Joint Commission of Pharmacy Practitioners, 2014).
- Collaboration and teamwork: Foster collaboration and teamwork in healthcare by actively participating, appreciating knowledge, and effectively communicating (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2016).
- Accountability: Accountability involves taking responsibility, admitting errors, learning from them, and seeking feedback for professional improvement (American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, 2017).
- Respect for diversity and cultural competence: Respect diversity and develop cultural competence for inclusive, patient-centered treatment in medicine (Institute of Medicine, 2003).
- Professional boundaries: Maintain professional boundaries with patients and colleagues to avoid jeopardizing professionalism or conflicts of interest (American Pharmacists Association, 2019).
- Time management: Show effective time management skills by prioritizing work, meeting deadlines, and utilizing time and resources efficiently (American College of Clinical Pharmacy, 2020).

Ethical Considerations:

In their everyday work, novice community pharmacists may encounter ethical quandaries such as balancing patient autonomy with medication safety or negotiating conflicts of interest.

Considerations:

- Providing additional ethical decision-making and professionalism training (Makowsky, 2007).
- Promoting open communication and collaboration with other healthcare professionals and patients in order to encourage shared decision-making (Nagappa & Chetty, 2017).
- Using a patient-centered strategy to strike a compromise between patient autonomy and pharmaceutical safety (Peterson, 2018).

Continuing Education:

Finally, new community pharmacists may feel overwhelmed by the requirement to stay up with changing pharmacy practices and laws.

Considerations:

- Providing continual education and training opportunities to assist pharmacists in staying up to date on best practices and laws (Makowsky, 2009).
- Participation in professional organizations and continuous education programs is encouraged (Nagappa & Chetty, 2017).
- Providing pharmacists with assistance and tools to pursue areas of interest and build specialized skills (Flynn *et al.*, 2014).

CONCLUSION

To summarize, new community pharmacists confront a number of challenges as they transfer from an academic to a professional setting. To address these concerns, a multimodal approach is required, which includes providing training and assistance, emphasizing drug safety, fostering a friendly work environment, and supporting ongoing education and professional growth. Community pharmacies can help ensure that novice pharmacists are fully equipped to offer safe and effective pharmaceutical therapy to patients by addressing these difficulties, thereby fostering improved health outcomes for everybody.

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