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Pharmacists' Role in Patient Counseling

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Summary : Patient counseling is a drug-information function. The pharmacist provides information to help patients take their drugs appropriately. The information is drug focused. In patient counseling, the type and amount of information to be given and the patients who will receive it is defined.

In this study, an inquiry has been carried out with 442 pharmacists, chosen among 1319 hospital and community pharmacists by the ratio-scale sampling method. The data was collected by personal interviews. The statistical analysis was made utilizing the SPSS (ver. 5.0) software programme.

In this study, pharmacists' role in the important component of Pharmaceutical care, is determined and the different aspects of the subject have been discussed.

Key words: Patient counseling, Pharmacist, Pharmaceutical care

Eczacıların Hasta Danışmanlığındaki Rolü

Özet : Hasta danışmanlığı, bir tür ilaç bilgisi verme fonksiyonudur. Eczacı, hastaların ilaçlarını daha doğru almalarına yardımcı olmak için bilgi verir. Verilen bilgiler ilaca odaklıdır. Hasta danışmanlığında, bilginin tipi, derecesi ve verileceği hastalar bellidir.

Bu çalışmada, Ankara İli'nde çeşitli hastanelerde ve eczanelerde çalışan 1319 eczacıdan oranlı tabakalı örneklem yöntemine göre seçilmiş 442 eczacıya bir anket uygulanmıştır. Yüzyüze görüşme ile anket tekniğine göre toplanan verilerin istatistiksel değerlendirmeleri bilgisayarda SPSS (ver. 5.0) paket programı yardımı ile yapılmıştır.

Bu çalışmada eczacıların, eczacılık hizmetlerinin bir komponenti olan hasta danışmanlığı işlevinde nasıl bir rol aldıkları saptanmaya çalışılmış ve konu çeşitli yönleriyle tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Hasta danışmanlığı, Eczacı, Farmasötik bakım

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the pharmacists' role in the health care system has become an important subject of discussion throughout the world. The profession of pharmacy has experienced significant growth and development over the past 30 years[1]. About thirty years ago, graduating pharmacists had three basic work positions: community practice, hospital practice, drugs industry, and graduate school and teaching. Today the work positions available to graduating entry-level pharmacists also include home care, long-term care, geriatric care, management, many clinical pharmacy, and research[2].

Next to drug dispensing, patient counseling is the most widely recognized professional function of pharmacists. Patient counseling is defined as "a one-on-one, interactive session designed to modify patient knowledge or behavior"[3].

Patient counseling is also includes drug-information function. Pharmacists provide information to help patients take their drugs appropriately. The information is drug focused. In patient

counseling, the type and amount of information to be given and the patients who will receive it should be defined[4,5].

In this study, pharmacists' role in patient counseling, and its application in Ankara is tried to be defined.

MATERIAL & METHOD

This study covers an area containing 1319 hospital and community pharmacists. The formation of samples has been made with the ratio-scale sampling method with the formula given below, which enabled the ratio and scale representation of sufficient number of pharmacists, among the 1319 samples[6,7]. The sampling has been done randomly out of the general body of samples.

$$n = \frac{\dfrac{t^2 \times PQ}{d^2}}{1 + \dfrac{1}{N} \times \dfrac{t^2 \times PQ}{d^2}}$$

n : sampling diameter
N : range of the scope
d : sampling error
t : table value of reliability level (2.58 for P< 0.01)
PQ : 0.25 (sampling percentage for maximum sampling diameter)

According to the formula the sampling diameter has been found to be 442 samples while the reliability ratio is 0.01. In this study the area investigated was divided into 9 scales with respect to the eight regions working under the registration of Ankara Chamber of Pharmacists and hospital pharmacists. According to the ratio-scale sampling method the following formula has been used to calculate the number of units to be taken from each group[7].

$$\frac{n}{N} \times Nj = nj$$

n : sampling diameter
N : range of the universe
Nj : number of units in groups
nj : number of units to be taken from a group

During the collection of the data from the pharmacists personal interviews and questionnaire methods have been used[7,8]. The statistical evaluation was accomplished by the utilization of SPSS (ver. 5.0) software programme.

FINDINGS

Some of the findings of this study have been obtained according to the answers given by 442 community and hospital pharmacists and the findings have been listed with respect to the order of the questions on the inquiry.

Table 1. The distribution of pharmacists according to their professional careers

	Number of pharmacists	Percentage
Hospital Pharmacists	93	21
Community Pharmacists	349	79
TOTAL	442	100

Table 2. Within the patient-pharmacist relationship, patient counseling is important

	Number of pharmacists	Percentage
Always	339	76.7
Frequently	73	16.5
Sometimes	30	6.8
TOTAL	442	100

Table 3. Pharmacists inform the patients about the adverse reactions of drugs they use

	Number of pharmacists	Percentage
Always	104	23.5
Frequently	136	30.8
Sometimes	152	34.4
Rarely	42	9.5
Never	8	1.8
TOTAL	442	100

Table 4. Patients require information about the indications of drugs from pharmacists

	Number of pharmacists	Percentage
Always	104	23.5
Frequently	180	40.7
Sometimes	125	28.3
Rarely	33	7.5
TOTAL	442	100

Table 5. Patients want to learn the characteristics of drugs such as adverse reactions, drug interactions, etc. from pharmacists

	Number of pharmacists	Percentage
Always	47	10.6
Frequently	122	27.6
Sometimes	191	43.2
Rarely	76	17.2
Never	6	1.4
TOTAL	442	100

Table 6. Pharmacists try to understand if the patients understand the given information during counseling

	Number of pharmacists	Percentage
Always	214	48.4
Frequently	139	31.4
Sometimes	75	17.0
Rarely	14	3.2
TOTAL	442	100

Table 7. Patients can easily understand the drug information given by pharmacists.

	Number of pharmacists	Percentage
Always	71	16.1
Frequently	145	32.8
Sometimes	164	37.1
Rarely	53	12.0
Never	9	2.0
TOTAL	442	100

Table 8. Patients visit the pharmacy to receive other health care services

	Number of pharmacists	Percentage
Always	65	14.7
Frequently	130	29.4
Sometimes	171	38.7
Rarely	52	11.8
Never	24	5.4
TOTAL	442	100

Table 9. Inadequate of time causes problems while pharmacists are giving drug information to the patients

	Number of pharmacists	Percentage
Always	57	12.9
Frequently	70	15.8
Sometimes	182	41.2
Rarely	80	18.1
Never	53	12.0
TOTAL	442	100

Table 10. It is appropriate to use standard forms during patient counseling

	Number of pharmacists	Percentage
Accept completely	97	21.9
Agree	228	51.6
Cannot decide	46	10.4
Do not accept	65	14.7
Definitely do not accept	6	1.4
TOTAL	442	100

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the distribution of the pharmacists in terms of their professional careers. According to this data 21 % of the pharmacists were working as hospital pharmacists, 79 % of them were working as community pharmacists.

According to the data given in Table 2, 76.7 % of the pharmacists stated that within the patient-pharmacist relationship, patient counseling has been always important for them, while the 16.5 % said often, 6.8 % said sometimes it has been important for them.

Table 3 shows the distribution of the pharmacists in terms of their attitudes about informing the patients about the adverse reactions of drugs they use. According to this, 23.5 % of the pharmacists stated that they always informed the patients about the adverse reactions of drugs, while 30.8 % said often, 34.4 % said sometimes, and 9.5 % said rarely. 1.8 % of the pharmacists stated that they never informed the patients (Table 3).

According to Table 4, 40.7 % of the pharmacists stated that patients often required information about the indications of drugs. 23.5 % of the pharmacists responded to this question saying always while 28.3 % said sometimes and 7.5 % said rarely.

According to Table 5, 43.2 % of the pharmacists stated that patients sometimes wanted to learn the characteristics of drugs such as adverse reactions, drug interactions, etc.

Table 6 shows the distribution of the pharmacists in terms of their attitudes of trying to understand whether the patients understood the given information during counseling. According to this data 48.4 % of the pharmacists stated that they always tried to understand whether the patients understood the given information during counseling.

According to the data given in Table 7, 37.1 % of the pharmacists stated that patients could sometimes understand the drug information given by them easily. 32.8 % of the pharmacists responded to this question saying often while 16.1 % said always and 12.0 % said rarely.

According to the data given in Table 8, 38.7 % of the pharmacists stated that patients sometimes visited the pharmacy to receive other health care services. 29.4 % of the pharmacists responded to this question saying often while 14.7 % said always and 11.8 % said rarely

According to the data given in Table 9, 41.2 % of the pharmacists stated that inadequate time sometimes caused problems while they were giving drug information to the patients.

According to the data given in Table 10, 21.9 % of the pharmacists stated that they definitely believed that it was appropriate to use standard forms during patient counseling, 51.6 % said they shared the opinion, 10.4% said they would not decide, 14.7 said they did not share the opinion, 1.4 % said they were definitely against it.

In conclusion, in Turkey the definition of pharmacy is given in law number 6197 entitled Law Concerning Pharmacists and Pharmacies[9]. According to this law, work positions for pharmacists are limited. Some of the pharmacists work in state institutions and hospitals, some of them work in the pharmaceutical industry and universities but most of them establish their own community pharmacy or work in a pharmacy in Turkey[10]. However, the laws and education system for pharmacy have become a subject of discussion in Turkey in recent years.

The dissatisfaction with the drug-oriented practice of pharmacy resulted in the pharmacist directing his/her attention towards a more patient centered practice. This is a positive development for pharmacy practice.

Patient education and counseling are usually given when prescriptions are dispensed but may also be provided as a separate service. The techniques and content should be adjusted to meet the specific needs of the patients and to comply with the policies and procedures of the practice setting[11].

Although the type and amount of services given to the patients is defined in the related laws, pharmacists believe in the importance of patient counseling. They supply patient counseling to the patients during dispensing. But patient counseling should be accepted as a separate professional service. Consequently the definition of pharmacists and the pharmacies should be renovated. Furthermore there should be regulations defined in the pharmaceutical education and the laws in Turkey.

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