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Scope and Job Opportunities in Pharmacy: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Pharmacy is the health profession that links the health sciences with the chemical sciences and it is charged with ensuring the safe and effective use of pharmaceutical drugs. The scope of pharmacy practice includes more traditional roles such as compounding and dispensing medications, and it also includes more modern services related to health care, including clinical services, reviewing medications for safety and efficacy, and providing drug information. Pharmacists, therefore, are the experts on drug therapy and are the primary health professionals who optimize medication use to provide patients with positive health outcomes. Pharmacists are highly-trained and skilled healthcare professionals who perform various roles to ensure optimal health outcomes for their patients. Many pharmacists are also small-business owners, owning the pharmacy in which they practice.

Keywords: Pharmacy, profession, healthcare, medication, patient.

1. INTRODUCTION

The pharmacy profession in India was marked by the first class of the chemist and druggist conducted at the Madras medical college in 1870s to train students, to gain skills in pharmacy practice. Pharmacy education pattern was based on the instructions provide by the pharmaceutical society of Great Britain.

The Profession of Pharmacy is a basic part of the healthcare system worldwide. Pharmacies with well-organized practice can go a long way to ensure excellence health care for the patient. In the past, pharmacists were responsible for dispensing medications only. Slowly, the traditional role of pharmacists is expanding and now pharmacists are playing a role as a vital team member in the direct care of patients, especially the new generation pharmacists who have Pharm. Ds. Pharmacists play a major role in providing healthcare services by means of community pharmacy services in rural areas where physicians are not available or where physician services are too costly for meeting the healthcare necessities. Many reforms are yet needed to improve job satisfaction among Indian pharmacists such as higher salaries, more job opportunities in government offices, recognition of pharmacists as health care professionals and changes in the Pharm. D and pharmacy curriculum. Pharmacists are highly-trained and skilled healthcare professionals who perform various roles to ensure optimal health outcomes for their patients. Many pharmacists are also small-business owners, owning the pharmacy in which they practice.¹

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2. CURRENT STATUS OF PHARMACY PROFESSION IN INDIA

The Pharmacy education in our country has witnessed tremendous expansion in last one decade. However, the standard in education has been eroded by rising tides of mediocrity. There is an urgent need to initiate an academic exercise aimed at attaining revamping of curriculum, keeping in pace with current and emerging trends in the field of pharmacy:

- We have today 6 lacs pharmacists in the country, of which 5 lacs are in community pharmacy. Diploma holders largely handle the pharmacy profession and the providing of quality pharmaceutical care is still a dream.
- However, significant developments underway may change the situation- -Increase in consumer awareness - Awareness among the pharmacists on the need to provide direct patient care -Entry of international players in community pharmacy and health insurance - Increasing foreign direct investment in health industry - Increase in awareness that quality pharmaceutical care can be delivered only by pharmacists trained in direct patient care.²

3. CAREERS IN PHARMACY

3.1 Community Pharmacy

Community pharmacists are health professionals most accessible to the public. They supply medicines in accordance with the prescriptions, or when legally permitted supply them without prescription. They also perform counseling of patients at the time of dispensing the medicines.

The International Pharmaceutical Federation has declared their vision of a community- based pharmacist.

1. An expert in pharmaceutical care, pharmacotherapy and health promotion.
2. A professional communicator with patients, other healthcare providers and decision makers
3. Deliver high quality products, services and communication.
4. Document their work and communicate the outcome to professional colleagues.³

3.2 Pharmaceutical industry

The pharmaceutical industry is a complex, multi-factorial environment, but with the overall aim of discovering, developing

and marketing safe and efficacious medicines, and it demands high standards and quality from its employees. With the rich skill mix developed and applicable from the Pharmacy undergraduate degree, the industry provides an ideal environment for a career rich in variety, diversity and challenges.⁴

3.3 Medical Information

As experts in providing drug information this department serves a primary entry point for a pharmacist into the world of pharmaceuticals. A pharmacist's role in medical information includes: providing responses to patient and physician inquiries, providing sales support (via training sessions and sales aids), gathering adverse event data (i.e. post-marketing surveillance).⁵

3.4 Sales

Pharmacists excel in the sales field, as they possess a strong technical background and excellent people skills. Performing physician and specialist calls as well training new reps are common roles for pharmacists in sales. A branch role in this department is the medical liaison. Pharmacists excel in this function as it involves utilizing a greater degree of clinical knowledge to call on specialists and difficult physicians.⁶

3.5 Clinical Pharmacy

Clinical pharmacy is defined as that area of pharmacy concerned with the science and practice of rational medication use. Dorland's Medical Dictionary defines clinical medicine as "the study of disease by direct examination of the living patient." That is, clinical pharmacists are involved in direct interaction with, and observation of, the patient. In addition, it is noted that clinical pharmacists practice both independently and in consultation or collaboration with other health care professionals, making it clear that they are members of an autonomous profession within their scope of practice yet also function as members of a cooperative health care team.⁷

3.6 Women Welfare-Pregnancy and Infant Care

The pharmacist who understands the normal course of pregnancy and infancy is at a distinct advantage as he or she can guide the mother in simple matters of hygiene and management. The community pharmacist can encourage breastfeeding and can play a major role by guiding the mother for the protection of the child by following proper immunization schedule. Efforts are definitely underway in this area.²

3.7 Academic Pharmacy

They are involved with teaching, research, public service, and patient care. Others serve as consultants for local, state, national, and international organizations. Pharmacy practice faculty has significant responsibility for patient care, in addition

to their work in teaching and research. These academicians often are called educator/ practitioners, and they serve as role models for pharmacy students and residents in many education/practice settings. Faculty in disciplines other than pharmacy practice usually is involved in pharmaceutical sciences research. The pharmaceutical scientists are mainly concerned with research that includes sophisticated instrumentation, analytical methods, and animal models that study all aspects of drugs and drug products. Moreover, social, economic, and behavioral science research often uses survey methods and statistical analyses to solve complex problems of drug utilization management, health care delivery, marketing, management, and other practice issues. To paraphrase one current pharmacy faculty member, "Perhaps no other job in pharmacy has such far-reaching effects on the profession as that of an educator. It is in academia that one can excite individuals about pharmacy and lay the groundwork for continuing advances in the field."⁸

4. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it can be concluded that pharmacists have a lot of career options. It depends on their knowledge, capacity, dedication for their work that how they explore career options. Pharmacist is a link between doctor and patient. As much as this link will be strong patients will get more benefits.

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