

It's All About the Therapeutics

Many years ago, during my stint as a faculty member at the University of Iowa College of Pharmacy, I had a colleague who used to preach that pharmaceutical care is all about the therapeutics. His meaning behind that statement was that the goal of pharmacists providing patient care (enhanced) services is to ensure medication optimization. This is what defines the unique role of pharmacists on the health care team—medication management. Pharmacists who practice at the top of their license/training are successfully intervening, on behalf of their patients, to ensure that their patients are achieving their therapeutic outcomes with safe and effective medications. By becoming interventionists, pharmacists are actively collecting and assessing patient clinical information, identifying and resolving medication-related problems, monitoring and following up with patients, and documenting their patient care activities. It is through these interventions that pharmacists improve their collaborative working relationships with prescribers by demonstrating their clinical knowledge and skills that improve patient outcomes.

Becoming an interventionist is particularly important during our current progression which is focused on diabetes and social determinants of health (SDoH)—both very complex issues. It's not enough to just say we've collected blood glucose values, A1cs, blood pressures, lipid panels, etc.—we need to ensure that patients medication regimens are clinically appropriate and having the intended effects to improve the health of our patients. If patients are not achieving their therapeutic goals, then we need to intervene and utilize our therapeutic knowledge to recommend clinically appropriate alternatives. Similarly, it is not enough that we collected the information on SDoH, but we need to intervene to ensure that our patients' needs are met. It also means that we are regularly and actively communicating with other providers.

Community-based pharmacists are one of the most accessible health care providers. In addition, we are one of the most underutilized highly educated and clinically trained professionals. We need to use our accessibility to patients to our advantage and use each patient encounter as an opportunity to improve their therapeutic outcomes. If we consistently do this, our patients health outcomes should improve, health care cost should be reduced, and payment for pharmacists enhanced services by payers will occur. Perhaps my pharmacist colleague was correct —“it's all about the therapeutics.”