

APPROACHES TO ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF DRUG THERAPY

A JOINT STATEMENT BY THE CMA AND THE CANADIAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION

This joint statement was developed by the CMA and the Canadian Pharmaceutical Association, a national association of pharmacists, and includes the goal of drug therapy, strategies for collaboration to optimize drug therapy and physicians' and pharmacists' responsibilities in drug therapy. The statement recognizes the importance of patients, physicians and pharmacists working in close collaboration and partnership to achieve optimal outcomes from drug therapy.

Goal of This Joint Statement

The goal of this joint statement is to promote optimal drug therapy by enhancing communication and working relationships among patients, physicians and pharmacists. It is also meant to serve as an educational resource for pharmacists and physicians so that they will have a clearer understanding of each other's responsibilities in drug therapy. In the context of this statement, a "patient" may include a designated patient representative, such as a parent, spouse, other family member, patient advocate or health care provider.

Physicians and pharmacists have a responsibility to work with their patients to achieve optimal outcomes by providing high-quality drug therapy. The important contribution of all members of the health care team and the need for cooperative working

relationships are recognized; however, this statement focuses on the specific relationships among pharmacists, physicians and patients with respect to drug therapy.

This statement is a general guide and is not intended to describe all aspects of physicians' or pharmacists' activities. It is not intended to be restrictive, nor should it inhibit positive developments in pharmacist-physician relationships or in their respective practices that contribute to optimal drug therapy. Furthermore, this statement should be used and interpreted in accordance with applicable legislation and other legal requirements.

This statement will be reviewed and assessed regularly to ensure its continuing applicability to medical and pharmacy practices.

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Correspondence and requests for additional copies should be addressed to the Member Service Centre, Canadian Medical Association, 1867 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa, ON K1G 3Y6; tel 888 855-2555 or 613 731-8610 x2307; fax 613 236-8864.

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Goal of Drug Therapy

The goal of drug therapy is to improve patients' health and quality of life by preventing, eliminating or controlling diseases or symptoms. Optimal drug therapy is safe, effective, appropriate, affordable, cost-effective and tailored to meet the needs of patients, who participate, to the best of their ability, in making informed decisions about their therapy. Patients require access to necessary drug therapy and specific, unbiased drug information to meet their individual needs. Providing optimal drug therapy also requires a valid and accessible information base generated by basic, clinical, pharmaceutical and other scientific research.

Working Together for Optimal Drug Therapy

Physicians and pharmacists have complementary and supportive responsibilities in providing optimal drug therapy. To achieve this goal, and to ensure that patients receive consistent information, patients, pharmacists and physicians must work cooperatively and in partnership. This requires effective communication, respect, trust, and mutual recognition and understanding of each other's complementary responsibilities. The role of each profession in drug therapy depends on numerous factors, including the specific patient and his or her drug therapy, the prescription status of the drug concerned, the setting and the patient physician pharmacist relationship. However, it is recognized that, in general, each profession may focus on certain areas more than others.

For example, when counselling patients on their drug therapy, a physician may focus on disease-specific counselling, goals of therapy, risks and benefits and rare side effects, whereas a pharmacist may focus on correct

usage, treatment adherence, dosage, precautions, dietary restrictions and storage. Areas of overlap may include purpose, common side effects and their management and warnings regarding drug interactions and lifestyle concerns. Similarly, when monitoring drug therapy, a physician would focus on clinical progress toward treatment goals, whereas a pharmacist may focus on drug effects, interactions and treatment adherence; both would monitor adverse effects.

Both professions should tailor drug therapy, including education, to meet the needs of individual patients. To provide continuity of care and to promote consistency in the information being provided, it is important that both pharmacists and physicians assess the patients' knowledge and identify and reinforce the educational component provided by the other.

Strategies for Collaborating to Optimize Drug Therapy

Patients, physicians and pharmacists need to work in close collaboration and partnership to achieve optimal drug therapy. Strategies to facilitate such teamwork include the following.

- Respecting and supporting patients' rights to make informed decisions regarding their drug therapy.
- Promoting knowledge, understanding and acceptance by physicians and pharmacists of their responsibilities in drug therapy and fostering widespread communication of these responsibilities so they are clearly understood by all.
- Supporting both professions' relationship with patients, and promoting a collaborative approach to drug therapy within the health care team. Care must be taken to maintain patients' trust and their

- relationship with other caregivers.
- Sharing relevant patient information for the enhancement of patient care, in accordance and compliance with all of the following: ethical standards to protect patient privacy, accepted medical and pharmacy practice, and the law. Patients should inform their physician and pharmacist of any information that may assist in providing optimal drug therapy.
- Increasing physicians' and pharmacists' awareness that it is important to make themselves readily available to each other to communicate about a patient for whom they are both providing care.
- Enhancing documentation (e.g., clearly written prescriptions and communication forms) and optimizing the use of technology (e.g., e-mail, voice mail and fax) in individual practices to enhance communication, improve efficiency and support consistency in information provided to patients.
- Developing effective communication and administrative procedures between health care institutions and community-based pharmacists and physicians to support continuity of care.
- Developing local communication channels and encouraging dialogue between the professions (e.g., through joint continuing education programs and local meetings) to promote a peer-review-based approach to local prescribing and drug-use issues.
- Teaching a collaborative approach to patient care as early as possible in the training of pharmacists and physicians.
- Developing effective communication channels and encouraging dialogue among patients, physicians and pharmacists at the regional, provincial, territorial and national levels to address issues such as drug-use policy, prescribing guidelines and continuing professional education.
- Collaborating in the development of technology to enhance communication in practices (e.g., shared patient databases relevant to drug therapy).
- Working jointly on committees and projects concerned with issues in drug therapy such as patient education, treatment adherence, formularies and practice guidelines, hospital-to-community care, cost-control strategies, sampling and other relevant policy issues concerning drug therapy.
- Fostering the development and utilization of a high-quality clinical and scientific information base to support evidence-based decision making.

The Physician's Responsibilities

Physicians and pharmacists recognize the following responsibilities in drug therapy as being within the scope of physicians' practice, on the basis of such factors as physicians' education and specialized skills, relationship with patients and practice environment. Some responsibilities may overlap with those of pharmacists (see The Pharmacist's Responsibilities). In addition, it is recognized that practice environments within medicine may differ and may affect the physician's role.

- Assessing health status, diagnosing diseases, assessing the need for drug therapy and providing curative, preventive, palliative and rehabilitative drug therapy in consultation with patients and in collaboration with caregivers, pharmacists and other health care professionals, when appropriate.
- Working with patients to set therapeutic goals and monitor progress toward such goals in consultation with caregivers, pharmacists and other health care providers, when appropriate.

- Monitoring and assessing response to drug therapy, progress toward therapeutic goals and patient adherence to the therapeutic plan; when necessary, revising the plan on the basis of outcomes of current therapy and progress toward goals of therapy, in consultation with patients and in collaboration with caregivers, pharmacists and other health care providers, when appropriate.
- Carrying out surveillance of and assessing patients for adverse reactions to drugs and other unanticipated problems related to drug therapy, revising therapy and, when appropriate, reporting adverse reactions and other complications to health authorities.
- Providing specific information to patients and caregivers about diagnosis, indications and treatment goals, and the action, benefits, risks and potential side effects of drug therapy.
- Providing and sharing general and specific information and advice about disease and drugs with patients, caregivers, health care providers and the public.
- Maintaining adequate records of drug therapy for each patient, including, when applicable, goals of therapy, therapy prescribed, progress toward goals, revisions of therapy, a list of drugs (both prescription and over-the-counter drugs) currently taken, adverse reactions to therapy, history of known drug allergies, smoking history, occupational exposure or risk, known patterns of alcohol or substance use that may influence response to drugs, history of treatment adherence and attitudes toward drugs. Records should also document patient counselling and advice given, when appropriate.
- Ensuring safe procurement, storage, handling, preparation, distribution, dispensing and record keeping of drugs

(in keeping with federal and provincial regulations and the CMA policy summary "Physicians and the Pharmaceutical Industry (Update 1994)" (Can Med Assoc J 1994;150:256A-C.)

- when the patient cannot reasonably receive such services from a pharmacist.
- Maintaining a high level of knowledge about drug therapy through critical appraisal of the literature and continuing professional development.
- Care must be provided in accordance with legislation and in an atmosphere of privacy, and patient confidentiality must be maintained. Care also should be provided in accordance with accepted scientific and ethical standards and procedures.

The Pharmacist's Responsibilities

Pharmacists and physicians recognize the following responsibilities as being within the scope of pharmacists' practice, on the basis of such factors as pharmacists' education and specialized skills, relationship with patients and practice environment. Some responsibilities may overlap with those of physicians (see The Physician's Responsibilities). In addition, it is recognized that, in selected practice environments, the pharmacists' role may differ considerably.

- Evaluating the patients' drug-therapy record ("drug profile") and reviewing prescription orders to ensure that a prescribed therapy is safe and to identify, solve or prevent actual or potential drug-related problems or concerns. Examples include possible contraindications, drug interactions or therapeutic duplication, allergic reactions and patient nonadherence to treatment. Significant concerns should be discussed with the prescriber.

- Ensuring safe procurement, storage, preparation, distribution and dispensing of pharmaceutical products (in keeping with federal, provincial and other applicable regulations).
- Discussing actual or potential drug-related problems or concerns and the purpose of drug therapy with patients, in consultation with caregivers, physicians and health care providers, when appropriate.
- Monitoring drug therapy to identify drug-related problems or concerns, such as lack of symptomatic response, lack of adherence to treatment plans and suspected adverse effects. Significant concerns should be discussed with the physician.
- Advising patients and caregivers on the selection and use of nonprescription drugs and the management of minor symptoms or ailments.
- Directing patients to consult their physician for diagnosis and treatment when required. Pharmacists may be the first contact for health advice. Through basic patient assessment (i.e., observation and interview) they should identify the need for referral to a physician or an emergency department.
- Notifying physicians of actual or suspected adverse reactions to drugs and, when appropriate, reporting such reactions to health authorities.
- Providing specific information to patients and caregivers about drug therapy, taking into account patients' existing knowledge about their drug therapy. This information may include the name of the drug, its purpose, potential interactions or side effects, precautions, correct usage, methods to promote adherence to the treatment plan and any other health information appropriate to the needs of the patient.
- Providing and sharing general and specific drug-related information and advice with patients, caregivers, physicians, health care providers and the public.
- Maintaining adequate records of drug therapy to facilitate the prevention, identification and management of drug-related problems or concerns. These records should contain, but are not limited to, each patient's current and past drug therapy (including both prescribed and selected over-the-counter drugs), drug-allergy history, appropriate demographic data and, if known, the purpose of therapy and progress toward treatment goals, adverse reactions to therapy, the patient's history of adherence to treatment, attitudes toward drugs, smoking history, occupational exposure or risk, and known patterns of alcohol or substance use that may influence his or her response to drugs. Records should also document patient counselling and advice given, when appropriate.
- Maintaining a high level of knowledge about drug therapy through critical appraisal of the literature and continuing professional development.

Care must be provided in accordance with legislation and in an atmosphere of privacy, and patient confidentiality must be maintained. Products and services should be provided in accordance with accepted scientific and ethical standards and procedures.