
Letter to Editor

Need for Pharmacists' Medicine Inventory Training in Pakistan:

The Missing Link

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Dear Editor,

Inventory Management (IM) of medicines is an important task performed by pharmacists at both community pharmacies and hospital pharmacy settings. To improve medicines' availability and quality, International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) emphasized on inclusion of pharmacists in all stages of Drug Supply Chain System (DSCS) (Morrow, 2015). Pharmacy staff spends 8–9 hrs/week in searching medicines and drug shortage in United States. Similarly 94% of pharmacists in Canada highlighted difficulty in locating medicines at their setting (Vaillancourt, 2012). No effective medicine procurement system is available in hospital pharmacies of Nepal for handling emergencies during natural disasters and health epidemics (Shrestha et al., 2018). Inappropriate forecasting technique, surplus medicines and lack of use of information technology are reported as

the main factors responsible for hindrance in effective hospital inventory management in Indonesia (Rachmania and Basri, 2013). Inventory management is considered time consuming process with limited resources in India (Kumar et al., 2016). Similarly, data sharing control system (DSCS) of hospitals is also fragmented in Bangladesh; pharmacists merely play any role in inventory control (Saha et al., 2017). However, well trained and skilled pharmacist can easily tackle issues related to drug procurement and inventory management. Therefore, the training of pharmacists in the area of DSCS is of prime concern in developing countries (Rachmania and Basri, 2013).

In Pakistan, the number of pharmacists working at hospital and community pharmacies had been inadequate. Their role is not well acknowledged and they merely act

as store keeper at these healthcare facilities. Hospital pharmacists is also not part of Pharmacy and Therapeutic Committees lacks and do not play any significant role in development of hospital formularies (Azhar et al., 2009, Malik et al., 2013). However, recently the health authorities in Pakistan, have paid attention towards establishing appropriate DSCS in the public healthcare facilities. For instance; in Punjab province approximately five hundred and eighty six seats of pharmacists have been allocated for primary and secondary health care. Other provinces are also taking important measures to increase the number of pharmacists in the hospitals. Expectantly, pharmacists will be involved in drug procurement process at these healthcare facilities in near future. Beside this, community pharmacies are also focused for appropriate DSCS by ensuring the presence of pharmacists at these outlets. Strict legislative measures are been taken against the rented licenses which in turn is promoting the role of pharmacists at community pharmacies. Although, pharmacist is responsible for inventory management but they lack basic training as pharmacy curriculum do not focus on practical training of inventory management software's and drug procurement (Yang, 2014). On the other hand, severe drug

shortage has also been observed at many community pharmacies as well as healthcare facilities (Fatima and Khaliq, 2017).

Thus, pharmacist should be equipped with adequate training regarding SAP and other latest inventory management software/s. This will not only help in promoting effective DSCS but will also help in promoting acceptance of role of pharmacist in meeting current and prospective needs of healthcare system of Pakistan.

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