Healthcare Provider's General Perception and Attitude toward Pharmacists in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Objective: To explore the Healthcare professionals' perception and attitude towards pharmacists in Saudi Arabia. **Methods:** It is a 4-month cross-sectional survey of healthcare professionals' perception towards pharmacists. The survey consisted of two-part of demographic information and second part forty-nine questions divided into four domains. It included domain one: healthcare providers general perception of pharmacist domain 2: Healthcare professionals' perception of pharmaceutical care services, domain 3: healthcare professionals' perception of visiting ambulatory care and domain 4: Healthcare professionals' perception of pharmacists' relationship and counseling. All types of healthcare professionals included in the study. The 5-point Likert response scale system was used. The questions were open and close-ended. The survey was distributed through social media by using WhatsApp to more than one thousand healthcare professionals overall the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The survey was made as an electronic format and it analyzed and discussed domain one: healthcare providers' general perception of pharmacist through monkey survey system. **Results:** The total responders were (170) healthcare providers. Of those 150 (93.8%) were Saudi and 10 (6.25%) were non-Saudi. The gender distribution was 129 (75.9%) females and 41 (24.1%) were males. The majority of patient visited the pharmacy in the past 12-months more than ten times were 53 (31.36%) while 40 (23.67%) attended as visitors for 5-9 times. Most of the patient (143 (87.2%)) spent less than 16 minutes waiting for the medication at the pharmacy. The statement said by pharmacists with highest score was "the pharmacist had the significant role in preventing medications errors (4.76), pharmacy job is vital in our society (4.74), the pharmacist participates in patient therapeutic plan as part of the medical team (4.5)". Also, the pharmacist is the first person to be asked about medications (4.47), Healthcare professionals know the clinical pharmacist and his role in patients' care (4.47). More than 60% of healthcare professionals will choose the pharmacy as specialty or suggest to the family members or friend to select the pharmacy as their profession. Most of the healthcare providers visited the pharmacy as the pharmacist knows more about drug doses and adverse drug reaction 98 (58.33%) and the to seek pharmacists help in general health illness (96 (57.14%)). Other reason for visiting the pharmacy to get free consultation (49 (29.17%)) and since there is no need to have an appointment for pharmacy visit (48 (28.57%)). Also, most of the healthcare professionals refused to utilize the pharmacy just for cosmetics (118 (70.23%)). **Conclusion:** Most of the healthcare professionals had a real perception towards the pharmacist and his role in preventing medication errors and sharing in the therapeutic plan. The pharmacist should expand clinical pharmacy services at all healthcare institutions in Saudi Arabia since there is an acceptance for such concept.

Key words: Healthcare Provider, Perception, Attitude, Pharmacists, Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of pharmaceutical care founded by Hepler and Strand in the early 1990s.^[1] The American society of health system pharmacist (ASHP) released the guideline of pharmaceutical care and implementation method at all healthcare organizations.^[2-3] The pharmaceutical care focused changed from the physician to the patient. That is all care with the objective of the patient. In the past, the pharmacy services provided the services with a

focus on the physician. That due to the not acceptable role of the clinical pharmacist within medical team and most of the physician in the past not recognized the pharmacist or had not acceptable perception. Several studies were published about healthcare professional's perception toward the pharmacist.^[4-8] The studies showed that difference and variations in attitudes and perception from one place to another one. It is difficult to find the local study about healthcare provider's perception with the pharmacist. In addition

to Gulf or Middle East counties. The objective of the study to explore the healthcare professional's perception toward the pharmacist in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

METHODS

It is a 4-months cross-sectional survey of healthcare professional's perception of a pharmacist. The survey was consisted of two-part demographic information and second part forty-nine questions divided into four domains. It included domain one: healthcare providers General perception of pharmacist domain 2: Healthcare professionals' perception of pharmaceutical care services, domain 3: healthcare professionals' perception of visiting ambulatory care and domain 4: Healthcare professionals' perception of pharmacist's relationship and counseling. All type of healthcare professionals included in the study. The 5-point Likert response scale system was used. The questions were open and closed-ended. The survey was distributed through social media by using what's App to more than one thousand healthcare professionals overall Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A messages reminder was sent to healthcare professional after two weeks and additional message reminders sent to healthcare professional after four weeks the survey was made in an electronic format and it analyzed domain one Primary or necessary information about healthcare professional's medication through survey monkey system.

RESULTS

The total responders were (170) healthcare providers. Of those 150 (93.8%) was Saudi and 10 (6.25%) was non-Saudi. The gender distribution 129 (75.9%) was female and 41 (24.1%) was male. Most of them were in age (18-44) 95.8% and located at Riyadh region 69 (41.6%), East Province region 36 (21.7%) and Alhasa region 26 (15.66%). The most educational level of the responders was bachelor's degree 126 (76.4%) followed by Diploma 16 (9.7%). Most of the healthcare providers were pharmacist 81 (47.65%), others 33 (19.41%), nurses 27 (15.88%) and physician 23 (13.53%). The majority of patient visited the pharmacy in the past 12-months was 53 (31.36%) more than ten times while 40 (23.67%) attended (5-9 times). The majority of healthcare professional visited the pharmacy at evening time 79 (47.31%) and morning 54 (32.34%). Most of patient 143 (87.2%) spent less than 16 minutes waiting for the medication from the pharmacy as explored in Table 1. The highest score statements related to pharmacist perceptions was the pharmacist had the significant role in preventing medications errors (4.76), pharmacy job is vital in our society (4.74), the pharmacist participates in patient therapeutic plan part of the medical team (4.5). Also, the pharmacist is the first person to ask him about the medications (4.47), Healthcare professionals knew about the clinical pharmacist and his role for the patients (4.47). Followed by calling the pharmacist by the doctor (3.89), the necessity of present school pharmacy (3.72) and the pharmacist has the very high social level (3.59). More than 60% of healthcare professionals will choose the pharmacy as professional specialty or suggest the family members or friend to select the pharmacy professional as explored in Table 2. The pharmacist shared in public education through the newspapers (3.84) and television and media (3.65) followed by public education exhibitors (3.67) and general school (3.55) as explored in Table 3. Most of the healthcare providers visited because the pharmacist knows more about drug doses and adverse drug reaction 98 (58.33%) and the pharmacist to seek help in health diseases 96 (57.14%). Followed by free consultation and 49 (29.17%) and no need for an appointment for pharmacy visit 48 (28.57%). Also, most of the healthcare professionals were refused to utilize the pharmacy just for cosmetics 118 (70.23%) as explored in Table 4.

DISCUSSION

The concept of pharmaceutical care stated implementation at Ministry of health institution during the first pharmacy strategic plan in mid of 2000s.

Table 1: Demographic responder qualifications information.

Items	Response Count	Response Percent
Sex		
Female	129	75.9%
Male	41	24.1%
Answered question	170	
Skipped question	0	
Nationality		
Saudi	150	93.75%
Non-Saudi	10	6.25%
Answered question	160	
Skipped question	10	
Age		
<18	0	0.00%
18 - 29	127	75.60%
30 - 44	34	20.24%
45 - 59	7	4.17%
60+	0	0.00%
Answered question	168	
Skipped question	2	
Type of visit		
Physician	23	13.53%
Dentist	4	2.35%
Pharmacist	81	47.65%
Nurse	27	15.88%
Others	33	19.41%
Answered question	170	
Skipped question	0	
In the last 12 months, the number of times visited the pharmacy		
None	6	3.55%
1 time	15	8.88%
2	21	12.43%
3	19	11.24%
4	15	8.88%
5 to 9	40	23.67%
10 or more times	53	31.36%
Answered question	169	
Skipped question	1	
Time of Visiting the Pharmacy		
Morning	54	32.34%
Evening	79	47.31%
Night	34	20.36%
Answered question	167	
Skipped question	3	
The waiting time to get the medications		
< 5	70	42.68%
5-10	53	32.32%
11-15	20	12.20%
16-20	7	4.27%
21-25	3	1.83%

Table 1: Cont'd.		
Items	Response Count	Response Percent
26-30	3	1.83%
31-35	0	0.00%
36-40	1	0.61%
41-45	1	0.61%
46-50	0	0.00%
51-55	1	0.61%
56-60	1	0.61%
More than 60	4	2.44%
Answered question	164	
Skipped question	6	
Total years of Experiences in Pharmacokinetic services		
Doctorate degree	6	3.64%
Master degree	8	4.85%
Bachelor Degree	126	76.36%
Diploma	16	9.70%
High school	8	4.85%
Intermediate School	0	0.00%
Primary School	1	0.61%
Not educated	0	0.00%
Answered question	165	
Skipped question	5	

The concept emphasized with the updated pharmaceutical care strategic planning in early 2012.^[9] The care changed from physician to the patients. The general administration of pharmaceutical released several pharmacy practice and clinical pharmacy program to the patient included but not limited to the medications safety, pain management services and the anticoagulation program.^[10-12] The healthcare professional's perception toward pharmacist is not well known in Saudi Arabia. The authors explored the healthcare professional's perception with the pharmacist in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The finding of the study showed half the healthcare professionals' responders were pharmacist and others maybe non-pharmacist that has implicated some bias of answering the question. It better to repeat the study and involved healthcare providers with equal responders. However, still you can at least come some results and conclusions from non-pharmacist professional's perception. The healthcare professionals visited several times in the last twelve months with majority of them came with follow up cases not first visit. Most of the healthcare professionals visited the pharmacy during event of period due they were busy during morning duty with their work and most of them visited community pharmacies non-hospitals pharmacies because the hospital pharmacy working at morning duty and cover with one to two pharmacists at evening and night duties. The results of number of visiting pharmacy by healthcare providers resemble what reported by Jose J *et al.* Khan MU *et al.* and Merks *et al.* as regular patients.^[13-15] The healthcare professionals spent more time during visiting the pharmacy with higher than the patient spent visits, which is maybe the healthcare professionals asking a lot and more discussion with the pharmacist. The healthcare professionals had excellent perception of pharmacist with role of pharmacist preventing medications errors. That has related the interaction between the pharmacist and healthcare professionals during dispensing medications to them. The healthcare professional's very good precept the pharmacist's involvement the pharmacist as part of medical team and participated in the therapeutic

Table 2: General Ideas about the pharmacist

No	Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
1	I am calling the pharmacist by the doctor	66	49	33	14	8	3.89	170
2	The pharmacist for dispensing medication only	12	25	16	67	49	2.31	169
3	The pharmacy job is vital in our society	130	33	4	1	0	4.74	168
4	the pharmacist has a very high social level	30	69	43	22	4	3.59	168
5	the necessity of present pharmacist schools	51	54	33	27	4	3.72	169
6	the pharmacist had the very significant role in preventing medications errors	132	33	2	1	0	4.76	168
7	pharmacist participates in patient therapeutic plan part of the medical team	105	50	8	5	1	4.50	169
8	I know the clinical pharmacist and his role for the patients	105	45	11	6	1	4.47	168
9	the pharmacist is the first person ask him about drugs	102	52	8	3	3	4.47	168
10	The community pharmacist for cosmetics only	7	12	31	83	35	2.24	168
11	I will choose pharmacy as my professional specialty if there is a chance for that	47	32	35	32	22	3.30	168
12	I will suggest my family members and friend choose pharmacy professional for his life	32	40	64	21	11	3.36	168
	answered question							170
	skipped question							0

Table 3: Pharmacist shares in public education through media.

No	Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
1	The pharmacist participates in public education in the schools	43	57	29	27	12	3.55	168
2	The pharmacist participates in medication public education through the televisions and media	48	60	33	21	6	3.73	168
3	The pharmacist participates in medication public education through the newspapers and magazines	43	76	32	13	4	3.84	168
4	The pharmacist participates in medication public education exhibitions	44	54	43	22	4	3.67	167
	answered question							168
	skipped question							2

Table 4: The reasons for patients ask the pharmacist before the physician.

No.	Answer Options	Response Count	Response Percent
1	To seek help in health diseases	96	57.14%
2	No need for appointment for pharmacy visits	48	28.57%
3	Fee consultation	49	29.17%
4	The pharmacist knows more about drug doses and adverse drug reaction	98	58.33%
5	I prefer the pharmacist consultations	28	16.67%
6	Other (please specify)	7	4.17%
	answered question	168	
	skipped question	2	

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASHP: American society of health system pharmacist; **MOH:** Ministry of Health; **KSA:** Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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plan. It resemble what reported by Jose J *et al.* and Khan MU *et al.* as patient perceptions not as healthcare professional.^[13-14] The healthcare professional's first-person asking about medications was pharmacist and had knowledge about the role of clinical pharmacist. That has related to new generation of pharmacist had Pharm D and residency graduates with significant pharmacist role in patient care. The finding of medication information of pharmacist better than physician resemble what reported by Khan MU *et al.*^[14] and better than what reported by Oshima S *et al.*^[8] as patient perceptions. That's related more development of the pharmacy professional than that's country. The healthcare professionals considered the pharmacy job is vital at our society and most of them recommended to their family or friend to be the pharmacist. The healthcare professionals considered the pharmacist as public educator through participating with newspaper, television and social media. The majority of healthcare professionals visited the pharmacy because the pharmacist knows more about medications and drug doses. That is good perception gave the pharmacist to expand the pharmacy services and their role to the public. In addition, the healthcare professionals visited the pharmacy demand of information about health and refuse to consider the pharmacist as resources only for cosmetic.

CONCLUSION

The healthcare professionals had an excellent perception of a pharmacist and their performance. Targeting to expand the role of pharmacist and pharmacy services at healthcare organization in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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