

Role of Community Pharmacies in Rational use of Medicines: A Scenario in Pakistan

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According to FIP Global Pharmacy Workforce Report there are more than 80,000 pharmacies in Pakistan and 12000 pharmacists.^[1] Whereas more than 708 pharmacists of Pakistan have departed abroad for their better future.^[2] Only 10% of pharmacists are involved in community pharmacy practices. It means that 1130 pharmacists are available for more than 80,000 pharmacies. So 99.98 % pharmacies are working without pharmacists. If we include the services of pharmacy technicians which are about 40000 shows that almost half of pharmacies are without qualified persons.^[1,3]

Among these 12000 pharmacists, majority have B.Pharm (Bachelor of Pharmacy) degree which was more toward drug development. Pakistan started five-year Pharm.D (Doctor of Pharmacy) in 2004. Even the syllabus of Pharm.D has shortcomings regarding clinical aspects of pharmacy.^[4-6] Clinical pharmacy is only discipline of pharmacy which provides patients care and promotes cure of ailment by optimizing drug therapy.^[7] Clinical training, clinical experienced academicians and practice-based facilities in Pakistan are still a big question mark.^[8-11] So the clinical pharmacy knowledge of pharmacists in Pakistan is not satisfactory.

Other challenges toward this include government, high officials, pharmacies owners and physicians. They want pharmacist to perform managerial and clerical job rather than scientific work.^[11-13] According to World Health Organization the number of medicines on the market is also a substantial challenge in rational use of medicines and pharmaceutical market of Pakistan have almost 70,000 registered brands.^[14,15]

So, during this decade, rational use of drugs in Pakistan promoted by community pharmacies through any legislatives and other clouts seems not possible. Meanwhile, Provincial government should start continuous training programs for the health care providers like pharmacy retailers including pharmacists, doctors and nurses to diminish irrational drug use until Pakistan acquire the mandatory number and education standard of pharmacists according to international standards.^[16]

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