
Urgent Need of Pharmaceutical Care by Pharmacists during Covid Pandemic

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LETTER TO EDITOR

Today the recurring waves of the CoViD pandemic are the greatest concern, especially in India with 1.38 a billion populations. The second wave of the B.1.617 variant of Corona Virus is spreading faster. Though the fatality has been contained mainly by the experienced medical health care team, the earlier evidence of high fatality among senior citizens has tapered and fatality rates have shifted towards the younger population between 40 and 50 years age group and few among children too. This has led to panic, causing a heavy overload on hospitals and the entire healthcare system. At this juncture, there is no alternative to systematic segmentation of symptomatic, asymptomatic, and contracted patients. Among the entire population, variably, there are the majority of the active infected cases, mostly need OPD services, some need to be hospitalized and monitoring only, others in good numbers need ICU or ventilators and, mortality surge is also observed significantly. However, due to fear and anxiety, many are approaching CoViD hospitals far too early or unnecessarily. And some are approaching CoViD hospitals far too late. The non-proportionate number of task force versus patient ratio and lack of appropriate facilities versus the cases demands the need for additional well-trained professionals. Amongst this community pharmacists can play a major role in this crisis management by contributing in various ways.

This critical condition demands patient care services from well-trained Community-Pharmacists for CoViD in the current situation on an urgent basis. Additionally for other diseases, we need trained pharmacists totaling 500,000 plus. Pharmaceutical Care (PhC) is given by community pharmacists dispensing medicines from stores. Despite existing regulations mandating PhC, most pharmacists are hesitant to provide PhC due to numerous reasons, the most common reason being 'lack of confidence in dealing with sudden and newly evolved disease conditions and its management due to lack of clinical knowledge and no training'. Now that we know the crucial need to train more than 500,000 community pharmacists to be able to provide Pharmaceutical Care, in India, (i.e. 1 PhC trained pharmacist per 2780 population). But how to train and compensate the pharmacists during this pandemic is also needs attention. The following recommendations seem to be appropriate at this hour of crisis: Government Resolution (GR) mandating online PhC training and provision: funded by financially strong organizations and with support of strong and powerful Pharmaceutical Industry.

A daily 30 minutes online training by experts like doctors, clinical pharmacists, academicians, research institutes, and healthcare specialists would go a long way in boosting

professional confidence in pharmacists. Most community pharmacies have a computer with billing software. These may become fingerprint augmented billing software (FABS) and showing a question in local language asking the customer: 'Did the pharmacist advice you on all aspects of medicine for 2 minutes?' If yes, please give your fingerprint to say "yes". We assure you that your record shall not be used except as 'Your 'specific "Yes". The same FABS be coded to compute compensation for PhC provided by the community pharmacist. Also, pharmacists may take 10 minutes' counseling sessions for disease-specific management and how to take preventive measures against complications, and take proactive actions and about the medication information in detail. Same FABS may help in compensating the pharmacist's remuneration. Additionally Pharmacy Council of India may create a star rating website or an application for the best Pharmacy based on the services provided. This will certainly enhance the social status of pharmacists and augment the healthcare system and help in reducing the healthcare burden to a greater extent. The appraisals or the Annual Confidential Reports of the supervisors, managers, and community pharmacists of pharmacies must have a column for rating PhC efforts to inspire community pharmacists to provide best of the pharmaceutical care to Covid affected patients and to all types of patients in the future also.

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