

The Art of Pharmacist-Provided Patient Care

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INTRODUCTION

The chapters presented in this book thus far provide information for creating, building, and sustaining an ambulatory patient care practice. As stated in Chapter 1, a professional practice requires three elements:

1. A philosophy of practice
2. A process of care
3. A practice management system

We have covered management systems and processes, but we have yet to address the art of practice. There is a humanistic side of practice that is not numbers or process; it is the philosophy of why we do what we do, where the focus is on patients' humanity, and our philosophy of practice. A philosophy of practice may be the most important intangible element needed to create, sustain, and grow your practice. Your personal philosophy of practice influences how you care for patients more so than didactic learning. In practice, patient care is a blend of using evidence from science and a humanities

Chapter Objectives

- Understand that there is an art to practice that is grounded in principles of humanity.
- Describe the meaning of true patient centeredness and patient engagement.
- Commit to the fullest practicing the three domains of professionalism: competency, connection, and character.

skill set. Equally important to getting the therapy right is making a connection, showing empathy, or using the power of touch and laughter in our work. The art of patient care that you provide reflects your beliefs, values, attitudes, ability to apply your knowledge, and your work ethic. For ambulatory pharmacist patient care practice to reach its full potential as an essential and valuable aspect of patient care, it is likely that a standard philosophy of practice must evolve.

Philosophy of practice in healthcare is not a new concept and dates to the Greek philosophers such as Hippocrates who promoted a holistic approach to healthcare.¹ The elements of the Hippocratic oath remains substantive today for those who provide patient care²:

- I will prescribe regimens for the good of my patients according to my ability and judgment.
- I will never do harm to anyone.
- I work only for the good of my patients.

In 1927, Francis Peabody suggested that to provide effective care, one should view the patient as an “impressionistic painting.”³ Patients are not only their biology, but also all the human aspects that make each patient a unique person.³ Impressionism focuses on the moment and the effect of light and color, capturing a feeling or experience for which clarity of the picture is secondary. The metaphor reflects that patient care is also an art and cannot be effective solely on applying science to each individual person. It must also include a human touch and understanding of what it is like to experience disease. In many situations, it is the critical intervention needed to achieve a desired outcome. Current medical philosophers continue to highlight the impressionism concept, as healthcare services are grounded foremost in human interactions that provide comfort and relief if not cure.⁴ The focus of a philosophy must be on patients and their needs and experience and their desired quality of life, as defined by them.

In Chapter 1, we introduced research that proposed five tenets for pharmacy practice philosophy.⁵ By summarizing those tenets, a practice philosophy statement can be generated that ambulatory patient care pharmacists may use to guide their practice:

As the best use of medications by patients is critical to their overall health and wellbeing, ambulatory patient care pharmacists through a caring, comprehensive and transparent patient-centered approach and in collaboration and coordination with the patient's healthcare team, assumes accountability and responsibility for optimal medication use for all patients under their care.

Simply stated, pharmacists, by being accountable for medication-related outcomes for their patients, should do whatever they need to do to optimize medications for each patient in their care. Sometimes the action required is not within a pharmacist's skill set or scope of practice. Such situations do not absolve the responsibility. It is the ambulatory pharmacist's job to inform, educate, provide evidence for the action, compromise if needed, and ultimately convince the person (provider or patient) to take the needed action for optimal medication use. It may require stepping out of a comfort zone to meet the patient's needs. For example, establish meals-on-wheels for consistent food intake to help manage diabetes or warfarin therapy, arrange transportation so the patient can make physician visits to get needed follow-up or pick up medications, or secure access to canes and walkers to prevent falls and consequences from anticoagulation therapy. It's wonderful if social services are available to assist in these