

What do patients want from their pharmacist?

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I recently attended a conference where a 'representative' patient was asked to talk about what patients want from the pharmacist. The reply was a very touching and honest one. One which I felt should be shared with the readers of our Journal.

Patients who come to the pharmacy for medication are people who are unwell. In some cases it may be mild but in others their condition may be very serious and having a significantly negative impact on their lives and those of their loved ones. Sometimes it may not be the patients themselves, but their carers who interact with the pharmacist, and they too could be passing through a difficult time. Hence the primary requirement was for the pharmacist to be kind and approachable and not just a person who is an 'expert' and instructs on the use of medication. The pharmacist needs to put the patient at ease, and address their fears and concerns. Some patients who are going through very difficult times may be scared

and anxious and need understanding and reassurance.

Having a pharmacist who can communicate effectively was seen a priority. Developing a professional relationship, earning the patients' trust and showing respect towards the patient and their situations would go a long way to supporting the patient and working together to achieve the desired health outcomes.

'I would like the pharmacist to know my name, I want to feel that she/he knows me and understands what I am going through. I want the pharmacist to smile, to listen to me, to talk to me in a language that I can understand. I would like the pharmacist to tell me "please make sure that you take your medication" in a way that he /she really means it. Above all I want the pharmacist to really care for me and demonstrate that care. Concluding our encounter with a personal approach such as "do your best to get better and come back if you need more assistance" would be really appreciated.'

I have reported the above paragraph in the individuals own words which I believe are very meaningful. The patient wants to be treated as a person first and foremost and wants to feel cared for. Patients want to build a relationship with the pharmacist, and would like the pharmacist to be receptive to this. While they want to be given general advice about their health and about their medication, discuss problems with their medication and be supported in the taking of their medication they want to do this in the right environment, both psychological and physical environment, which needs to be created by the pharmacist.

What patient is highlighting can only be achieved when pharmacists make the full transition from product focus to patient focus. While this may have been achieved in some situations, in others it is still lacking and we need to strive harder towards this goal. Treating the patient as a person who needs our care, support and expertise will enable us to better deliver the necessary pharmaceutical care to the individual.