

The pharmacy profession's scope is being expanded rapidly everyday compared to the how it was in the past. A couple of decades ago, pharmacy practice was basically limited to checking and dispensing prescriptions; however, nowadays, due to the continuous increase in the demand for healthcare services, pharmacists are developing different tasks to achieve a comprehensive patient care either from a community or hospital setting. In Alberta, the scope of practice is one of the broadest in the world, allowing pharmacist to use their knowledge and professional judgment to prevent and solve drug therapy problems along with other health professionals. Pharmacies are, most of the time, the first point of contact when a patient has a concern related to their health, and this is an opportunity to promote prevention measures and control of the health-related problems. Also, as mental health problems and addictions are increasing in Canada, it is important for pharmacists to gain knowledge and preparedness to get involved in the circle of care of these patients achieving the best possible outcomes.

In terms of accessibility to health services, it is usually convenient for patients to go to the closest community pharmacy when they have a consultation related to their health instead of going to the hospital, which saves them time and avoid unnecessary exposure to sickness. This makes the pharmacist the first point of contact within the health system, facilitating these health professionals to treat, prevent and refer if appropriate according to their knowledge, as well as to stop the diseases to advance or transmit to other people which plays an important role in reducing the number of patients in hospitals when unneeded. For example, after being carefully assessed and after discarding any red flags that might require referral for further investigation, a pharmacist can treat a patient suffering from a minor ailment condition and recommend an over-the-counter treatment. This will alleviate the patient's symptoms more effectively allowing them to incorporate back to daily activities, and it also will help save resources and expenses to the Canadian health care system which can be focused for other patients with more severe conditions.

Continuity of care is also something that can be applied to a pharmacy setting. For instance, the pharmacists need to perform daily follow ups and monitoring to patients for potential side effects, treatment effectiveness and adherence to help them prevent complications and making sure that the patient goals are being met during the drug therapy. Constant collaboration with other health professionals involved in a patient circle of care is key to achieve a continuous monitoring of the patient health conditions. Furthermore, communication with other individuals such as family, friends or caregivers that look after a patient with limited physical and mental capacities and who are unable to take care by themselves is also vital in this context. The responsibility for pharmacists is not just to dispense and counsel the patient about the drug therapy hoping that their health problems to resolve only with these limited actions. An important part of the patient care process is to monitor the disease state checking parameters that will reveal if the treatment is being effective or if any changes need to be made. As it was mentioned before, communication with the patient is essential to get valuable information and gives the individual a patient-centered service that sees them as a person and not only as one more patient in the pharmacy. It is crucial to listen the patient's needs, experiences and what are their main goals with the therapy. By doing this, pharmacist can also detect risks factors that might worsen an actual health condition or even develop a new one that can be preventable, providing recommendations for therapy modifications, if necessary, in collaboration with other professionals.

Additionally, patients with different mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, psychosis, bipolar disorder, among others are increasing in number in the Canadian pharmacies. This requires the pharmacy professional to be knowledgeable about these health conditions as well as to keep continuing learning from the most updated and trusted resources. During pharmacy practice, pharmacists dispense, counsel, monitor and follow up different kinds of treatments to treat mental conditions, thus it is important to listen patient's experiences and stories, using

empathy and non-verbal communication, providing a private space in the pharmacy so the patient can vent about their feelings regarding their disease and the pharmacologic treatment. Nonpharmacological therapies along with the medication will provide the patient with a more complete treatment to achieve better outcomes, due to that it is crucial for the pharmacist to know about these options and give the patient information about how to access these services. Depending on the condition, patients can start only with nonpharmacological measures, and these can prevent them from unnecessary drugs and unwanted side effects.

Moreover, regarding patients that have addiction to opioids or other controlled drugs, pharmacists need to provide a comprehensive counselling including information like appropriate use of medication, how to recognize a drug toxicity if taking opioids as well as the steps to follow in case of an overdose. A close monitoring to these patients is recommended to be aware of any side effects, efficacy of medication or over adherence that might be presenting. It is also important to take the time to talk to the patient, answer any question and be open to listen any concerns that they can have. If there is anything that the pharmacist cannot do because is out of their scope, is highly recommended to have the best resources available to provide them to patients so they can find a solution for their condition or refer to other health professionals if applicable.

As a conclusion, pharmacy professionals in Alberta are allowed to perform a variety of interventions to prevent, treat, monitor and follow patient's medication therapy. This privilege requires pharmacist to increase their preparedness in the area and reflect about how they can go beyond the pharmacist's basic tasks such as dispensing and counselling. Being the first point of contact in the health services chain gives pharmacists more responsibility to decide the steps to be taken next meaning a significant impact in the patient's health condition. Also, continuity of care with constant follow-up and monitoring helps to know about the safety, efficacy and adherence of current medication taking the appropriate measures to make any changes in drug therapy if required. As it

was mentioned before, pharmacists can make the difference when talking to patients with mental health or addiction problems. Being open to communicate and listen to these patients can provide valuable information to health professionals, as well as being empathetic when listening their stories and provide additional resources that the patient can reach to get positive results. As a future pharmacist in Canada, I am aware of the responsibility that I will have in a scope of practice as the one in Alberta; however, I also know that I will have the opportunity to always do more than is expected for the patients and cause a positive impact in their lives.