

Stigma In The Pharmacy Setting



The Importance of Establishing a Relationship with Your Pharmacy Patients

The busy environment and lack of privacy in a community pharmacy setting makes it difficult to build rapport with patients, but pharmacists who make the extra effort to develop relationships with patients have the greatest impact on their care. Below is a list of benefits of developing a relationship with your patients:

- The better you know someone, the more they're willing to tell you, and the more opportunities you will have to solve a problem if it arises.
- Just because a patient suffers from a condition they are ashamed of doesn't mean they shouldn't have an opportunity for the best care. No one asks for the condition they suffer from.
- Often the only constant in the person's life is the community pharmacy. Providers change, or the patient sees three to four different providers. But pharmacists and pharmacy staff have the opportunity to do a visual evaluation once a month when the patient comes to refill prescriptions. They're in a position to do something if they see a patient needs immediate care.
- Pharmacists and pharmacy staff should be mindful of how they present themselves to patients. Remember it's important to make patients feel welcome. Be aware of your body language. If you stand far back, patients notice that. Many people with a range of conditions are eager to discuss their treatment.
- Patients typically read every word of the handouts they are given. The patient population is interested in learning about their medications and wants to talk about them, so pharmacists need to make these patients feel it's okay to ask questions.
- When stigma is being expressed in a pharmacy setting, discrimination is the result. If it in turn affects a patient's drug therapy, such as causing nonadherence or large gaps in treatment, it can lead to an increased risk for poor treatment outcomes, such as rehospitalization, declining physical health, and early death.

Pharmacists who display stigma toward patients may not be doing so intentionally, but such acts remain a clear violation of the oath of a pharmacist. Studies have shown that patients with mental illness may receive less pharmacy services than patients with cardiovascular disease due to the existence of these stigmas.

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