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**BOOK REVIEW****COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN PHARMACY PRACTICE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND PRACTITIONERS (5<sup>th</sup> EDITION)** By William N Tindall, Robert S Beardsley and Carole L Kimberlin 2011, 242 pages, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins**Amanuel Gebru**

*Communication Skills in Pharmacy Practice: a Practical Guide for Students and Practitioners* is a significant contribution to the critical, yet undervalued area of communication in pharmacy education as well as pharmaceutical practice. The book is a vivid portrayal of communication in practice as it relates to pharmacy, but it is also about the conceptual backdrop to communication in general and relevant communication elements particular to pharmacy. The book addresses personal and more importantly professional communication needs of pharmacy students as they learn to provide quality care to patients in diverse pharmaceutical settings through effective therapeutic communication. The numerous skills and sub-skills presented and discussed which are vital to practice in pharmacy make the book a valuable reference to any one professionally involved in pharmaceutical services. The review questions and cases, photographs, illustrations and tables provide rich realistic contexts which can help the pharmacist to reflect on and resolve the practical day-to-day challenges of ably and calmly communicating with patients of diverse makeup and needs. The book's preface provides a succinct picture of what the professional reader would expect following perusal of the core introductory issues revolving around the meaning and importance of communication in pharmacy practice, which has now transitioned from the drug-centered model to the patient-centered approach. By way of simplifying the complex nature of communication, the authors provide accompanying manuals for instructors of pharmacy as well as pharmacy assistants. The book has a total of 14 chapters that were refined in

subsequent reprints and two chapters that were added to the original 12 chapters.

Chapter I address the core issue of patient centered communication in pharmacy. This chapter lays out the pharmacist's responsibility in the provision of patient care and cascades in to the role of communication in the meeting of healthcare needs of the client. It also presents an emphatic view of patient care through a portrayal of the patient perspective as well as a discussion of the need for the assignment of a central role to the client-patient in the therapeutic process. Following on from this chapter, the next chapter addresses the central meaning and role of communication by identifying the elements and the process of what constitutes communication including most notably the message, the sender and the receiver.

Chapter 3 delineates elements of nonverbal communication following a discussion of interfaces and differences between the two types of communication. This discussion further includes decoding nonverbal messages as projected by patients, identification and control of nonverbal barriers in communication as well as the management of delicate issues in the communication process as it unfolds in the pharmaceutical setting. There is a more exhaustive discussion of communication barriers in chapter 4 where barriers are classed into five categories.

Chapter 5 deals with the aural skills as related to patient interviews. The chapter competently shows the central importance of good listening for the pharmacist. There is also a discussion of the need for establishing rapport and the need to expect the possibility of problems arising as the pharmacist endeavors to forge helping relational ties. The next

chapter starts out with assertiveness as a construct, showing its importance in both relational and informational avenues in a variety of interpersonal and professional contexts.

Interviewing forms the subject of Chapter 7 where all elements of interviewing are discussed and the roles of the patient and the pharmacist brought to light. As it is apparent from the chapter, the pharmacist must competently talk and listen to the patient to learn about the patient's complaints, needs, and concerns and to convey back information and offer therapeutic recommendations. An effective interview is proven as an example of two way communication that results in satisfaction for both involved parties and allied partners. As the chapter demonstrates the diagnostic importance of the pharmacy interview is simply tremendous. Treatment outcomes to a large degree hinge on the conversational encounter being fully disclosive and exhaustive. In chapter 8 the authors relate the pharmacist's helpful role regarding the issue of regimen adherence by patients which is critical to the achievement of desirable outcomes. In this communication process, the consulting role emerges as a process critical to follow up patient progress once a particular drug regimen has been administered an important component of which forms the provision of precautionary advice.

The pharmacist's side of the transaction is the educational input into patients' informed decisions. This includes maximizing compliance; in fact compliance itself has been called an outcome of social interaction. However, the extent to which a patient's behavior coincides with medical advice is not to be oversimplified as it is not dependent on any single factor but a condition influenced by a litany of variables including attitudes and knowledge. Thus, the chapter would have done better if it highlighted the functional limits of communication. The next chapter further takes up the pharmacist's clinical role in assuring patient safety through communication efforts. This includes the importance of assertive communication of side effects as well as other drug-related concerns as articulated by the patient during a course of medication. The authors present useful strategies to enhance medication safety and to address dispensing errors once they have occurred. From this particular chapter inference may be drawn that communication errors are

identified as the prime issue in the majority of medication errors, adverse reactions, and near-misses.

Chapter 10 presents vital strategies revolving around the important topics of elderly patients: communication disorders, patients with special medical conditions which include patients with physical impairments, end-of-life patients, patients with psychiatric issues as well as those with low health literacy. Chapter eleven's special relevance to communication with pediatric patients is particularly interesting. One of the evident strengths of the book is perhaps its relevance to pediatric issues in pharmacy communication and care. Chapter 12 elucidates the understudied subject of professional relationships in the broad field of medicine and highlights the relevance of communication in promoting cross professional communication for enhanced patient outcomes.

Chapter 13 has a preoccupation with the role of electronic communication in pharmacy encompassing among others patient-provider and inter-professional use of email as a facility. However, the authors also caution about the misuse and related ethical consequences of online communication in pharmacy. But more discussion of ethics as it relates to pharmacy practice is abundantly treated in the last chapter of this valuable book which many in pharmacy schools and those in practice will find both stimulating and useful.

The book compares well with and is in fact arguably better than such similar-theme books as *Pharmacists Talking with Patients* (Melanie J. Rantucci, 2006); *Clinical Skills for Pharmacists: a Patient-focused Approach* (Karen J. Tietze, 2003); *Communication Skills for Pharmacists: Building Relationships, Improving Patient Care* (Bruce A. Berger, 2005); and *Interpersonal Communication in Pharmaceutical Care* (Helen Meldrum, 1994). The multiple authorship, addressing as it does a broad spectrum of readers, has given the book noticeable extra weight and advanced perspective. Like no other it combines most capably the needs of multiple stakeholders - particularly pharmacists and pharmacy students.

The book may have structural problems as reflected in the lack of style consistency in the different chapters as well as the substantive inadequacy which may frustrate sophisticated

readers, yet taking it as introductory one would say the book does its job immensely well. As such, it is important reading for pharmacists,

pharmacy students and pharmacy instructors as well as those seeking to join the world of pharmacy.