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Patients' Perception, Expectation And Satisfaction From Pharmacy Services

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ABSTRACT

Background: Pharmacy services have been advancing beyond simple medication provision to become a more patient-oriented and empathic service. Pharmacists participate with other health professionals to achieve the best clinical outcome and to enhance patients' quality of life. The study aims to compute the level of patients' expectations and perception towards, and satisfaction from pharmacy services and determine integrated factors that might affect the patients' expectation and satisfaction level. **Methodology:** An observational and cross-sectional study was conducted on 100 subjects using systematic random sampling technique, during August-September-2017 in different cities of Punjab.Patients who had mental problem, needed emergency attention, and patients who visited the pharmacies more than one time within the study period were excluded from the study **Results:** Low or high level of patient contentment and expectation of the pharmacy service might be affected by a number of various factors like demographic characteristics of the patient, waiting time, pharmacy setting, availability of medication, and quality of service. Some other factors might affect the patients' contentment like qualification; experience and pharmacist were not professionally skilled. Most of the clients were satisfied with pharmacy services while a few have negative anticipations. The usefulness of all studied parameters relating to patients need, contentment, approach and expectations was driven based on the information provided by the patient.

KEYWORDS: Pharmacy services, Patients' perception, Satisfaction level, Quality of care

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INTRODUCTION

Pharmacy services have been advancing beyond simple medication provision

to become a more patient-oriented and empathic service. Pharmacists work in collaboration with other health professionals to achieve the best clinical outcome and to enhance patients' quality of life.The pharmacist is also looked forward to have a suitable caring attitude and to implement his/her pharmacotherapy knowledge and expertise for the improvement of patients' health and well-being [1].

Patient contentment is the extent of positive perception that patients experience having used a service. It too signifies the gap between quality of service anticipation and the actual experience of the service provided from the patients' point of view [2].

Patient contentment has become an essential component of the quality of health-care services [3].

It is becoming a prevailing health-care quality sign, in which pharmaceutical services are an essential component as it expresses the actuality of service or care provided. It is an accepted reality that satisfaction effects adherence and striving for medical attentions [4].

A survey done to examine the connection between treatment contentment and adherence, compliance, and persistence inferred that greater treatment contentment was associated with improved compliance and better persistence [4]. Evaluating patient contentment is an approach for distinguishing and meeting patients' needs. Providing better access to quality pharmacies is a manner to improve patient contentment with health-care services [1]. Low or high level of patient contentment and expectation of the pharmacy service might be effected by a number of various factors. A few of these factors are demographic characteristics of the patient, waiting time, pharmacy setting, availability of medication, and quality of service [5,6]. Moreover, the patient contentment level is found to be directly related to the patient's expectation [7].

It is supposed that, if Good Pharmacy Practice (GPP) is realized in the pharmacist workplace, and the roles played by pharmacists are as expected by patients and society, high degree of clients' satisfaction will be achieved. As per FIP/WHO, GPP is "the pharmacy practice that responds to the necessities of the people who use the pharmacists' services to provide optimal, evidence-based care" [8]. A competent pharmacist service will pledge pharmacists to prepare, obtain, store, protect, deliver, administer, dispense, and dispose of medical products, supply efficient and productive medication therapy supervision, maintain and enhance professional performance, and contribute to enhance effectiveness of the health-care system and public health.

Elevated level of contentment was observed in few aspects of the pharmacy in numerous studies. A study conducted in Malaysia presented that 91.5% of the clients were satisfied with the respectful behavior of the pharmacy staff [9]. The study conducted in Malta also presented that 90% of the patients were satisfied by the professional behavior of the pharmacists. 94% of the consumers were very satisfied with the provision of direction on how to take medication, and 95% of patients were satisfied in dealing uncertainties and question with pharmacists [10].

In Ethiopia, the extensive client expectation from MRO services was high. The greatest expectation was found concerning verification of prescriptions for completeness and preciseness, and the lowest went to supervising safe and effective use of the medicines to ensure the advancement of their health. The general expectation of the respondents toward MROs was low in those who did not understand the difference between a pharmacy and a drug store compared to those who claimed to be aware of the difference [11].

However, in few other aspects of the pharmacy service, consequential ratio of patients/clients was not satisfied. 61.2% of the patients do not comprehend the information provided by pharmacists in a survey conducted in AL-Jabar Ear-Nose-Throat Hospital, Saudi [7].

Concerning patient expectation toward pharmacy service, survey conducted in Gondar at community pharmacies showed that more than two-third of the respondents anticipate comfortable waiting area (62.2%) and >85% of the clients expect the pharmacist to examine the prescription for perfection [12]. An article published by College of Pharmacy in Ohio state university exhibited that patients have a very low expectation on patient counseling services proposed by pharmacists [13].

For general services, pharmacist behavior, availability of medication, comfort, pharmacy facilities, and location were found to strongly effect patient contentment positively [14-16]. Prescription fill waiting time regularly effected patient satisfaction negatively [14]. The greater the frequency of counseling, supervision and the more directed guidance, the greater the contentment rating [17-19].

Present study aims to assess the level of patient's expectation toward and satisfaction from pharmacy service and to identify associated factors that might affect the patient's expectation and satisfaction level.

METHODOLOGY

An observational and cross-sectional study was conducted on 100 subjects from different cities of Punjab Pakistan during August-September-2017. Study participants were selected by systematic random sampling method by taking every 4th patient served from each pharmacy. Patients who had mental problem, patients who needed emergency attention, and patients who visited the pharmacies more than one time within the study period were excluded from the study. A data collection form was concisely designed covering the aspects like Information related to patients' socio demographic characteristics parameters that measure their expectation, and satisfaction, Perceptions/ expectations of patients about the inpatient department services, Logistic arrangements, waiting time, facilities, performance/behavior of staff, appointment system and support services and quality of follow up were analyzed.

Appropriateness of each study parameter concerning patient needs, expectation, perception and satisfaction was determined on the basis of information provided by the patient.

RESULTS

Awareness of Pharmacist

People were asked that whether they consider a pharmacist as a health professional or not, as depicted in Table-1. 77% strongly and 19% agreed that pharmacists are health professionals while 3% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed to it. Pharmacist's availability in the pharmacy was asked and that too 24/7 as he is the one who is the custodian of the provision of pharmacy services to the patients. 78% strongly agreed and 18% agreed that pharmacist is available in the pharmacy while 4% disagreed to it. 15% strongly and 74% people assured pharmacist's presence for 24/7 in the pharmacy while only 11% negated the fact. These results showed that masses are aware of pharmacist being a part of healthcare system.

Perception about Pharmacist

Patients' perceptions about the role of pharmacists are depicted in Table-2. A total of 90% people perceived pharmacists to be health professionals being able to advise them on health related issues while only 10% of them disagreed to it. 7% (strongly agree) and 15 % (agree) people thought that pharmacists' job is only to dispense medicines. 10% thought that they are just business people selling medicines while 90% disagreed to this misconception.

Results showed that many of them understood pharmacists various vital roles other than dispensing and making money. Patients' expectations from pharmacist were assessed. 86% patients were of the

TABLE-1
Awareness of Pharmacist: (N=100)

Sr. no.	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Pharmacist is a health professional.	77 (77%)	19 (19%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)
2.	Pharmacist is available in the pharmacy.	78 (78%)	18 (18%)	4 (4%)	0 (0.0%)
3.	Pharmacist is available 24/7 in the pharmacy.	15 (15%)	74 (74%)	10 (10%)	1 (1.0%)

TABLE-2
Perception about Pharmacist: (N=100)

Sr.No	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Pharmacists give advice on health related issues.	65 (65%)	25 (25%)	9 (9%)	1 (1.0%)
2.	Pharmacists just dispense medicines.	7 (7.0%)	15 (15%)	69 (69%)	9 (9.0%)
3.	Pharmacists are just business people selling medicines.	4 (4.0%)	6 (6.0%)	74 (74%)	16 (16%)
4.	The pharmacist to check prescription for completeness and legality.	14 (14%)	72 (72%)	12 (12%)	2 (2.0%)
5.	Pharmacist to ask me how well my medical conditions are controlled.	10 (10%)	71 (71%)	15 (15%)	4 (4.0%)
6.	Pharmacist to explain how each of my medication supposed to help me.	65 (65%)	23 (23%)	8 (8.0%)	4 (4.0%)
7.	Pharmacist to offer me a choice of information sources.	11 (11%)	30 (30%)	8 (8.0%)	51 (51%)
8.	Pharmacist to ask me if I have concerns about medication.	8 (8.0%)	75 (75%)	9 (9.0%)	1 (1.0%)
9.	Pharmacist guide me on how to take medicines.	21 (21%)	23 (23%)	56 (56%)	0 (0.0%)
10.	Pharmacist guide me on when to take medicines.	18 (18%)	27 (27%)	55 (55%)	0 (0.0%)
11.	Pharmacist is involved in patient counseling.	75 (75%)	21 (21%)	10 (10%)	1 (1.0%)
12.	Pharmacist guide me about the therapeutic alternative to my drug in case of non-availability of the one prescribed.	9 (9.0%)	79 (79%)	12 (12%)	0 (0.0%)
13.	Pharmacist available for advice in selecting non-prescription products	61 (61%)	22 (22%)	14 (14%)	3 (3.0%)
14.	Pharmacist to advise me on current medical condition and about lifestyle modification.	4 (4.0%)	28 (28%)	68 (68%)	1 (1.0%)
15.	Pharmacist to involve me in decision making aboutmedication	8 (8.0%)	26 (26%)	64 (64%)	3 (3.0%)
16.	Reasonable privacy during discussing.	59 (59%)	25 (25%)	13 (13%)	3 (3.0%)
17.	Pharmacists calling regularly to check on effects of medicines	56 (56%)	20 (20%)	13 (13%)	11 (11%)

TABLE-3:
Services provided by the Pharmacist

Sr. No.	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Medicines are dispensed accurately.	63 (63%)	34 (34%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)
2.	Cognitive services (B.P & sugar check) are available in the pharmacy.	73 (73%)	22 (22%)	5 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)
3.	Medicines are available at reasonable price.	62 (62%)	23 (23%)	11 (11%)	5 (5.0%)
4.	Keeping of personal medication profiles for future reference	63 (63%)	16 (16%)	17 (17%)	4 (4.0%)

view that pharmacist should check their prescription that whether it is appropriate, complete and legal while 14% were not. 81% widely expected him to ask how well is their medical condition controlled while 19% did not. 88% also expected to be asked how the medication is going to work for them positively and about their other medication related queries but 59% didn't want to be offered a choice of information sources.

Patients' satisfaction regarding pharmacist's advisory services was assessed. 44% didn't want to be guided by pharmacist on how and when to take their medications. This may be due to the fact that they think doctor is the right person for this and a pharmacist doesn't know much about these issues. This is the prevalent reality of our society. 75% (strongly agree) and 21% (agree) people affirmed that pharmacist is involved in patient counseling while only 11% disagreed to this fact. 88% said that pharmacist suggest them therapeutic alternatives to their drugs in case of non-availability of the one prescribed while 12% disagreed to it. 61% people strongly agreed that pharmacist is available to advise them on selecting OTC products but 17% of them disagreed. 32% people wanted to be advised on their lifestyle modification by a pharmacist while 69% did not. 67% people did not wanted to be involved in decision making about their medications may be because they think it has nothing to do with them and is the matter of an intellectual health personnel only. About 84% people were satisfied with the privacy provided to them while discussing their issues with the pharmacist while 16% were not since they may not like being interrupted by other visitors during consultation. 76% patients wanted pharmacists to check on the effects of medicines while 24% did not.

Services provided by the Pharmacist

Patient's satisfaction regarding the availability of cognitive services and reasonable priced medicines were assessed. As depicted in Table-3, 95% people admitted that appropriate cognitive services are provided in pharmacy and only 5% disagreed to it. 85% of them said that medicines are economic, while a 16% disagreed to it. 79% of the people agreed on keeping medication profiles for future reference while 21% disagreed.

DISCUSSION

The main objectives of the study were to assess the level of patients' expectation toward and satisfaction from the pharmacy services and to identify the associated factors that might affect the patients' expectation and satisfaction level.

In this study, the questionnaires were distributed at random along with explanation of the purpose of the study. Our response rate is corresponding to those in other surveys reported as apportionmenting the questionnaires without an assigned interviewer [20-22].

Onset of some diseases, the course of many, and

the management of about all can be significantly affected by feelings, moods and thoughts of the patients' the socioeconomic and psychological convenience underlying evaluation of patient contentment make this assessment vital exercise. Majority of the respondents consider pharmacist as a health professional while very few disagreed [23].

A large majority agreed that pharmacist's availability in the pharmacy is compulsary and he is the one who is the custodian of the provision of pharmacy services to the patients.Very few disagreed to it. Similarly large majority agreed to assure pharmacist's presence for 24/7 in the pharmacy while only few negated the fact.

Patient satisfaction was evaluated with reference to the location of pharmacy. Less than half agreed that pharmacy location is convenient while about more than half had to travel long distance to reach any particular pharmacy. There were criticisms concerning the comfort of the waiting area. Only 34% of people were satisfied with the area provided for waiting in the pharmacy.

Patients 'perceptions about the role of pharmacists were analyzed. A large majority perceived pharmacists to be health professionals being able to advise them on health related issues [24] while only few of them disagreed to it. About 1/5th of the respondents agreed the thought that pharmacists' job is only to dispense medicines. Only few thought that pharmacist are just business people selling medicines while large majority disagreed to this misconception. Percentages show that many of them understood pharmacists various vital roles other than dispensing and making money.

Patients' expectations from pharmacist were assessed. Majority of the patients were of the view that pharmacist should check their prescription that whether it is appropriate, complete and legal while less were not. Majority widely expected him to ask how well their medical condition is controlled while less did not. A large majority also expected to be asked how the medication is going to work for them positively and about their other medication related queries but more than half didn't want to be offered a choice of information sources.

Patients' satisfaction regarding pharmacist's advisory services was assessed. Less than half didn't want to be guided by pharmacist on how and when to take their medications. This may be due to the fact that they think doctor is the right person for this and a pharmacist doesn't know much about these issues. This is the prevalent reality of our society.

Less than half people strongly agreed that pharmacists guide them about the possible side effects of medicines while more than half disagreed to it. A large majority affirmed that pharmacist is involved in patient counseling [25] while only few disagreed to this fact.it was further investigated that a large majority said that pharmacist suggest them therapeutic alternatives to their drugs in case of non-availability of the one prescribed while few disagreed to it. More than half participants strongly agreed that pharmacist is available to advise them on selecting OTC products but less percentage of them disagreed. About 1/3rd people wanted to be advised on their lifestyle modification by a pharmacist while 2/3rd did not. While 2/3rd patients did not want to be involved in decision making about their medications may be because they think it has nothing to do with them and is the matter of an intellectual health personnel only.

Majority of the patients were satisfied with the privacy provided to them while discussing their issues with the pharmacist while very less percentage were not since they may not like being interrupted by other visitors during consultation. 2/3rd patients wanted pharmacists to check on the effects of medicines while 1/4th did not. About all were aware of the view that medicines are dispensed accurately.

Patient's satisfaction regarding the availability of cognitive services and reasonable priced medicines were assessed. A large majority of participants admitted that appropriate cognitive services are provided in pharmacy and only few disagreed to it. Majority of them said that medicines are economic, while a less percentage disagreed to it. 1/4th of the people agreed on keeping medication profiles for future reference while 1/5th disagreed.

The patient's recognition to efficiency of medical care and increased continuity of care has considerable interconnection with patient satisfaction. However there

is non-homogenous indication for patient contentment. An appropriate quality of treatment or service proved satisfactory for one patient may not fulfill another patient needs with greater expectations. Human desires know no limit but the threshold level for the actual patient needs and requirements should be met. Patients with lower levels of education are mostly satisfied and have fewer expectations. It is the necessity of the hour that physicians should view the relationship as patient-physician partnership association than the relationship as being physician controlled in order to have greater levels of patient satisfaction. Increased personal care will conclude in better communication and more patient involvement, and therefore ultimately better quality of care.

CONCLUSION

Pharmacy is a life saving profession. Patient's recognition to efficiency and effectiveness of pharmacy services are better judged by their satisfaction from pharmacy services. Pharmacist must be available to improve quality of life of patients.

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