

CHAPTER- 2 Principle and Significance of professional ethics, Critical study of the code of pharmaceutical ethics drafted by PCI

Principle and Significance of professional ethics

The profession of pharmacy is noble in its ideals and pious in its character. Apart from being a career for earning livelihood it has inherent in it the attitude of service and sacrifice in the interests of the suffering humanity. In handling, selling, distributing, compounding and dispensing medical substances including poisons and potent drugs a pharmacist is, in collaboration with medical men and others, charged with the onerous responsibility of safeguarding the health of people. As such he has to uphold the interests of his patrons above all things. The lofty ideals set up by Charaka, the ancient Philosopher Physician and Pharmacist in his erunciation : “Even if your own life be in danger you should not betray or neglect the interests of your patients” should be fondly cherished by all Pharmacist.

Government restricts the practice of Pharmacy to those who qualify under regulatory requirements and grant them privileges necessarily denied to others. In return Government expects the Pharmacist to recognize his responsibilities and to fulfil his professional obligations honourably and with due regard for the well being of Society.

Standards of professional conduct for pharmacy are necessary in the public interest to ensure an efficient pharmaceutical service. Every pharmacist should not only be willing to play his part in giving such a service but should also avoid any act or omission which would prejudice the giving of the services or impair confidence in any respect for pharmacists as a body.

The nature of pharmaceutical practice is such that its demands may be beyond the capacity of the individual to carry out or to carry out as quickly or as efficiently as the needs of the public require. There should, therefore at all times, be a readiness to assist colleagues with information or advice.

A Pharmacist must, above all be a good citizen and must uphold and defend the laws of the state and the Nation.

ETHICS :-

1)(PHARMACIST IN RELATION TO HIS JOB) SCOPE OF PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICE:

When premises are registered under statutory requirements and opened as a pharmacy, a reasonably comprehensive pharmaceutical service should be provided. This involves the supply of commonly required medicines of this nature without undue delay. It also involves willingness to furnish emergency supplies at all times.

Conduct of the Pharmacy:

The conditions in a pharmacy should be such as to preclude avoidable risk or error or of accidental contamination in the preparation, dispensing and supply of medicines.

The appearance of the premises should reflect the professional character of the pharmacy. It should be clear to the public that the practice of pharmacy is carried out in the establishment. Signs, notices, descriptions, wording on business, stationary and related indications, should be restrained in size, design and terms. Descriptions, which denote or imply pharmaceutical qualifications, should be limited to those of which the use is restricted by law and should not draw invidious distinction between pharmacists. A notice stating that dispensing under (Employees State Insurance Scheme) E.S.I.S. or any other such other scheme sponsored by Government is carried out may be exhibited at the premises. In every pharmacy there should be a pharmacist in personal control of the pharmacy who will be regarded as primarily responsible for the observance of proper standards of conduct in connection with it. Any obstruction of the pharmacist in the execution of his duty in the respect by the owner will be regarded as a failure on the part of the owner to observe the standards in question.

Handling of Prescriptions:

When a prescription is presented for dispensing, it should be received by a pharmacist without any discussion or comment over it regarding the merits and demerits of its therapeutic efficiency. The Pharmacist should not even show any physiognomic expression of alarm or astonishment upon the receipt of a prescription; as such things may cause anxiety in patients or their agents and may even shake their faith in their physician. Any question on a prescription should be answered with caution and care; it should neither offend a patron nor should it disclose any information, which might have been intentionally, withheld from him.

It is not within the privilege of a Pharmacist to add, omit or substitute any ingredient or alter the composition of a prescription without the consent of the prescriber, unless the change is emergent or is demanded purely by the technique of the pharmaceutical art and does not

cause any alteration in the therapeutic action of the recipe. In case of any obvious error in it due to any omission, incompatibility or overdosage, the prescription should be referred back to the prescriber for correction or approval of the change suggested. While such an act is imperative in the best interest of the patient, in no case should it be done in a manner, which may jeopardize the reputation of the prescriber concerned.

In matter of refilling prescriptions a pharmacist should solely be guided by the instructions of a prescriber and he should advise patients to use medicines or remedies strictly in accordance with the intention of the physician as noted on the prescription.

Handling of Drugs:

All possible care should be taken to dispense a prescription correctly by weighing and measuring all ingredients in correct proportions by the help of scale and measures: visual estimations must be avoided. Further, a Pharmacist should always use drugs and medicinal preparations of standard quality available. He should never fill his prescriptions with spurious, sub-standard and unethical preparations.

A Pharmacist should be very judicious in dealing with drugs and medicinal preparations known to be poisonous or to be used for addiction or any other abusive purposes. Such drugs and preparations should not be supplied to any one if there is reason to suppose that it is required for such purpose.

Apprentice Pharmacist:

While in-charge of a dispensary, drugstore or hospital pharmacy where apprentice pharmacists are admitted for practical training, a pharmacist should see that the trainees are given full facilities for their work so that on the completion of their training they have acquired sufficient technique and skill to make themselves dependable pharmacists. No certificate or credentials should be granted unless the above criterion is attained and the recipient has proved himself worthy of the same.

2)PHARMACIST IN RELATION TO HIS TRADE PRICE STRUCTURE:

Prices charged from customers should be fair and in keeping with the quality and quantity of commodity supplied and the labour and skill required in making it ready for use, so as to ensure an adequate remuneration to the pharmacist taking into consideration his knowledge, skill, the time consumed and the great responsibility involved, but at the same time without unduly taxing the purchaser.

Fair Trade Practice:

No attempt should be made to capture the business of a contemporary by cut-throat competition, that is, by offering any sort of prizes or gifts or any kind of allurements to patronizers or by knowingly charging lower prices for medical commodities than those charged by a fellow pharmacist if they be reasonable. In case any order or prescription genuinely intended to be served by some dispensary is brought by mistake to another, the latter should be refused to accept it and should direct the customer to the right place. Labels, trade marks and other signs and symbols of contemporaries should not be imitated or copied.

Purchase of Drugs:

Drugs should always be purchased from genuine and reputable sources and a pharmacist should always be on his guard not to aid or abet, directly or indirectly the manufacture, possession, distribution and sale of spurious or sub-standard drugs.

Hawking of Drugs:

Hawking of drugs and medicinals should not be encouraged nor should any attempt be made to solicit orders for such substances from door to door. 'Self-service' method of operating pharmacies and drug-stores should not be used as this practice may lead to the distribution of therapeutic substances without an expert supervision and thus would encourage self-medication, which is highly undesirable.

Advertising and Displays:

No display material either on the premises, in the press or elsewhere should be used by a pharmacist in connection with the sale to the public of medicines or medical appliances which is undignified in style or which contains: –

- (a) Any wording design or illustration reflecting unfavourably on pharmacist collectively or upon any group or individual.
- (b) A disparaging reference, direct or by implication to other suppliers, products, remedies or treatments.
- (c) Misleading, or exaggerated statements or claims.
- (d) The word "Cure" in reference to an ailment or symptoms of ill-health.
- (e) A guarantee of therapeutic efficacy.
- (f) An appeal to fear,
- (g) An offer to refund money paid.

- (h) A prize, competition or similar scheme.
- (i) Any reference to a medical practitioner or a hospital or the use of the terms “Doctor” or “Dr.” or “Nurse” in connection with the name of a preparation not already established.
- (j) A reference to sexual weakness, premature ageing or loss of virility.
- (k) A reference to complaints of sexual nature in terms which lack the reticence proper to the subject.

No article or preparation advertised to the public by means of display material of a kind mentioned above should be exhibited in a pharmacy if it is known or could reasonably be known that the article or preparation is so advertised.

Contraceptive preparations and appliances or their illustrations should not be exhibited except a notice approved by regulations or bearing the words “Family Planning Requisites”. Under no circumstances should lustful obscene and indecent publications of any kind or description be sold or distributed. As this practice is highly detrimental to the moral welfare of the Nation.

3) (PHARMACIST IN RELATION TO MEDICAL PROFESSION) LIMITATION OF PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY:

Whereas it is expected that medical practitioners in general would not take to the practice of pharmacy by owning drugstores, as this ultimately leads to coded prescriptions and monopolistic practices detrimental to the pharmaceutical profession and also to the interest of patients, it should be made a general rule that pharmacists under no circumstances take to medical practice, that is to diagnosing diseases and prescribing remedies therefore even if requested by patrons to do so. In cases of accidents and emergencies a pharmacist may, however, render First Aid to the victim.

No pharmacist should recommend particular medical practitioner unless specifically asked to do so.

Clandestine Arrangements:

No pharmacist should enter into any secret arrangements or contract with a physician to offer him any commission or any advantage of any description in return for his favour of patronage by recommending his dispensary or drugstore or even his self to patients.

Liaison with public:

Being a liaison between medical profession and people, a pharmacist should always keep himself abreast with the modern developments in pharmacy and other allied sciences by

regularly reading books, journals, magazines and other periodicals, so that on the one hand he may be in a position to advise the physician on pharmaceutical matters like those of colours, flavours, vehicles and newer forms of administration of medicines, on the other he may be able to educate the people for maintaining healthy and sanitary conditions of living.

Thus a pharmacist can contribute his share in the nation-building activities of the country. A pharmacist should at all times endeavour to promote knowledge and contribute his quota in the advancement of learning.

A pharmacist should never disclose any information which he has acquired during his professional activities to any third party or person unless required by law to do so. He should never betray the confidence which his patrons repose in him or which he has won by virtue of his eminent character and conduct.

4) PHARMACIST IN RELATION TO HIS PROFESSION VIGILANCE (imp)

It is not only sufficient for a pharmacist to be law-abiding and to deter from doing things derogatory to Society and his profession, but it should be his bounden duty to make others also fulfil the provisions of the pharmaceutical and other laws and regulations. He should not be afraid of bringing or causing a miscreant to be brought to book, may be a member of his own profession. Whereas it is obligatory for a pharmacist to extend help and cooperation to a fellow member in his legitimate needs, scientific, technical or otherwise, he is to be, at the same time, vigilant to weed the undesirable out of the profession and thus help to maintain its fair name and traditions.

Law-abiding Citizens:

A pharmacist engaged in profession has to be an enlightened citizen endowed with a fair knowledge of the land and he should strive to countenance and defend them. He should be particularly conversant with the enactments pertaining to food, drug, pharmacy, health, sanitation and the like and endeavour to abide by them in every phase of his life. A pharmacist is a unit whole and his life cannot be divided into compartments.

Relationship with professional Organisations:

In order to inculcate a corporate life in his own professional colleagues, a pharmacist should join and advance the cause of all such organisations, the aims and objects of which are

conducive to scientific moral and cultural well-being of pharmacists and at the same time are in no way contrary to the code of pharmaceutical ethics.

Decorum and Propriety:

A pharmacist should always refrain from doing all such acts and deeds which are not in consonance with the decorum and propriety of pharmaceutical profession or which are likely to bring discredit or upgrade to the profession or to himself.

PHARMACISTS' OATH

A young prospective pharmacist should feel no hesitation in assuming the following Pharmacists' Oath:

"I promise to do all I can to protect and improve the physical and moral well-being of society, healding the health and safety of my community above other considerations. I shall uphold the laws and standards governing my profession avoiding all forms of misrepresentation, and I shall safeguard the distribution of medical and potent substances.

Knowledge gained about patients I shall hold in confidence and never divulge unless compelled to do so by law.

I shall strive to perfect and enlarge my knowledge the better to contribute to the advancement of pharmacy and the public health.

I furthermore promise to maintain my honour and credit in all transactions and by my conduct never to bring discredit to myself or my profession nor to do anything to diminish the trust reposed in my professional brethren.

May I prosper and live long in favour as I keep and hold to this my Oath but should I violate these Sacred promises may the reverse be my lot".