FIP STATEMENT OF POLICY
Pharmacy: Gateway to Care

Preamble

Knowledge, prevention and management of disease has changed dramatically in recent decades. In addition to the responsibility of governments to provide the fundamental right of health, citizens also have a responsibility to care for themselves — "self care" — through illness prevention, health education, and application of healthy living principles. Although the "medical model" of care, characterised as handing over one's health to a professional to manage, was and is an important concept and practice, a "social model" of care focused on policies, education and health promotion that directs efforts to the social, economic and environmental determinants of health may well be essential now and in the future.

This statement underscores the importance and benefits of self care. It recognises both the personal responsibility of patients[1] to enhance and maintain their own health and well-being, and the responsibility of pharmacists to support patients in self care activities. Appropriate support by pharmacists will assist patients in improved or maintained health, greater health self-efficacy[2], and higher economic efficiency. The accessibility of pharmacists coupled with their professional health expertise make them and their services a critically important component of self care. The dual collaborative interaction between patients and pharmacists, with or without the provision of a therapeutic substance, confers undoubted benefits to the total health care system.

Introduction

Self care as part of the health care system
Although self care varies across cultures and reflects individual and community beliefs, confidence and experiences, it may be broadly defined as the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, and maintain health, as well as to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health care provider. Fundamentally the concept of self care puts responsibility on individuals for their own health and well-being. Definitions of

---

[1] The word patient in this statement shall be an all-inclusive term for conventional patients, consumers, individuals and customers of advice, knowledge, services and products.
[2] An individual's belief in his or her capacity to learn and perform a specific behaviour successfully.

self care vary as to who engages in self care behaviour, what motivates behaviours, and the extent to which health care professionals are involved.

Within any national health system with or without universal health coverage, there are challenges to improve the determinants of health and to optimise the resources used in health production and delivery. It is important to recognise the role of self care within the health system, while noting that access to medicines, information and health services varies across national jurisdictions.

Urgency of investing in self care

The outcomes from hundreds of systematic reviews, randomised controlled trials and large observational studies[3] suggest that supporting behaviourally focused self-management can have benefits for people's attitudes and behaviours, quality of life, independence and productivity, clinical symptoms and use of health care resources.

Ever-increasing financial constraints in the health care system and the interest of patients to take an active role in their treatment has stimulated the development of self care. The economic pressures faced by patients in acquiring health services, and providers to deliver quality and affordable services, is greater than ever. As population longevity increases, whether through better hygiene, nutrition, or advances in medicine, the sustenance of viable quality health systems, and therefore health, will require the optimal use of all health competencies, both by individuals and governments. Evidence indicates that support provided by pharmacists for patient self care is valuable.[4]

Consequently, the concept of self care has been pushed to the forefront of strategies to manage and improve health within the available resources, augmented by a number of other factors including patient demand for better health care; patient demand for convenient and secure access to medicines; better educated and more health-informed patients who are willing to take more health responsibility, and the recognition of the utility of an expanded role for pharmacists. Furthermore, the role of self care is strengthened by society's greater understanding and appreciation for the early application and investment in the concept to minimise the advent of costlier and more complex illness and to maximise healthy living.

---

[3] "Pharmacy as a gateway to care: Helping people towards better health". A reference paper by the International Pharmaceutical Federation www.fip.org

[4] Evidence: Helping People Help Themselves May 2011 ISBN 978–1–906461–26–3 The Health Foundation *www.health.org.uk/sites/health/files/HelpingPeopleHelpThemselves.pdf*

Background

Empowering patients

Although a survey conducted in 2013[5] indicated that 90% of respondents saw self care as a vital part of the management and prevention of chronic conditions and diseases, including minor ailments, it is important to acknowledge the diversity among and within individuals globally. This diversity is exemplified by patient factors such as level of health literacy, personal confidence and degree of engagement to manage their own health, previous experiences with self care, and satisfaction with the health system.

Unsurprisingly, the lower the perceived knowledge, skills and capacities for self care, the higher the dependence on health care professionals for understandable information.

Responsible and effective self care, founded in health literacy and informed by two-way communication with health professionals, plays an important role in health delivery around the world, and gives people greater control of their own health and encourages healthy behaviours.

There is evidence of the value and effectiveness of improved health literacy leading to greater use of self care, which contributes to easing the burden borne by any country's hard-pressed health services and associated budget, while improving health outcomes, patient convenience and quality of life for all.[6]

Benefits of self care at the individual and community level can be achieved by and through playing an active, versus passive, role, being self-reliant for minor symptoms and conditions, economic benefits from optimised medical consultations, reduced absenteeism from work due to minor symptoms and reduced pressure on medical services especially where health workforce is limited.

Pharmacist practice guidelines and contributions

Patients' access to pharmacists as their first-line health professional is well documented. Pharmacists globally are developing many individual or collaborative initiatives to support self care.

Two specific pharmacists' roles and functions described in the 2011 *"Joint FIP/WHO guidelines on good pharmacy practice: standards for quality of*

---

[5] Epposi. *The Epposi Barometer: Consumer Perceptions of Self-Care in Europe - Quantitative Study 2013.* Brussels: Epposi, 2013.

[6] GAP Taskforce on Self Care**.** Towards responsible self care: the role of health literacy, pharmacy and non-prescription medicines. Strawberry Hill : Global Access Partners Pty Ltd, 2015.

pharmacy services" refer directly to self care*.* First, "to disseminate evaluated information about medicines and various aspects of self care". In this case, pharmacists should ensure that the information provided to patients, other health care professionals and the public is evidence-based, objective, understandable, non-promotional, accurate and appropriate. Furthermore, they should educate patients on how to evaluate and use web-based or other forms of health care information (including medicines information) and strongly encourage them to seek advice from a pharmacist regarding the information they find, particularly if obtained from the Internet. Pharmacists should assist patients and their care providers to obtain and critically analyse information to meet their individual needs. Secondly, "to engage in preventive care activities and services. Minimum national standards should be established for these activities". Essentially, there is a role for pharmacists to help patients navigate health systems and to evaluate health information. Pharmacists should engage in preventive care activities that promote public health and prevent disease, for example, in areas such as smoking cessation, and sexual health. Pharmacists also should provide reliable point-of-care testing, where applicable, and other health screening activities for patients at higher risk of disease.

There is much evidence demonstrating that pharmacist input into self care is highly effective. The value of this pharmacist input derives from:

- Their competency: The ability to safely assess minor illness effectively and distinguish it from major disease;
- An economic factor: The ability to support self care efficiently by reducing health costs, both in terms of medicine and salary costs and through indirect costs by enabling people to remain at work or to minimise time off work;
- An integration factor: The ability to ensure continuity of care; and
- Communication and access factors: The ability to interact effectively with the public.

AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, FIP RECOMMENDS THAT:

Government and insurers:
1. Recognise and promote the relevance and importance of self care within their health care systems;
2. Fully incorporate and integrate pharmacists/pharmacy within their health systems both for the prevention and management of illness, at both the individual and health system level;
3. Invest in a properly educated and regulated pharmaceutical workforce, including pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and interns;

4. Invest in early childhood and primary school education curricula on the key points of health and health care;
5. Assure proper compensation for pharmacist self care services, and encourage health sector collaboration to optimise efficiency, safety and value.

Pharmacy organisations:

1. Advocate the case for self care through coordination and building the evidence base for self care;
2. Provide professional leadership for the greater establishment and implementation of self care by supporting pharmacies to achieve a better understanding of local health and social needs of the community they serve, so that they can be responsive to local needs through new services;
3. Support their members to achieve high standards of self care practice through education, evidence-based practice and business guidelines;
4. Ensure that rural communities have access to local and committed community pharmacies that interface extensively with both healthy and non-healthy people to deliver essential public and private services;
5. Guide the innovation of service and service delivery within pharmacies;
6. In respect of the internet and technology, optimise the use of data and knowledge to develop and share intelligence for sound policies. Integrate, and use to their full potential, new technologies applicable to self care.

Pharmacists:

1. Assist individuals to:
   o Seek to be better educated in caring for themselves. This education, sourced from local or global health providers, health promotion resources of the local or national health system or patient organisations, will yield greater patient confidence in managing one's health and personal level of health literacy;
   o Share and educate others on their inherited and indigenous cultures and beliefs with the goal of having clearer communication among the patient's health providers;
   o Be aware of the health determinants and indicators for themselves and their children.
2. Develop and adopt standard operating procedures for quality management of self care presentations, such as, but not limited to:
   o Applying the pharmaceutical care concept to self care;
   o Assuring quality and safety of self care though proper documentation of their work and provision of services such as medicines reconciliation, adherence support and medication management;
   o Ensuring accurate use and interpretation of results derived from current best self care technologies;

Fédération
Internationale
Pharmaceutique

International
Pharmaceutical
Federation

- o Pharmacists' triage, including appropriate patient referral to and from alternate services within the health care system.
3. Advocate, promote, support and engage in:
   - o Collaboration with the patient and their health team, and as a patient advocate within the health system;
   - o Various health promotion activities and health education;
   - o Best legislation on factors that affect self care;
   - o Enhancing their personal communication and coaching skills under the theme of health literacy — "listen to learn" rather than "listen to respond".

AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, FIP COMMITS TO:
1. Support member organisations to develop quality standards for self care services and protocols for self care provision appropriate to their national context;
2. Advocate pharmacist delivered self care services to improve and manage health;
3. Collect and disseminate data to inform the development and provision of self care;
4. Work with its members to chart a code of professional ethics for self care;
5. Promote public understanding of self care through its constituent bodies;
6. Liaise with the pharmaceutical industry to promote the responsible use of medicines for self care, including but not limited to, development of self care products, therapies and information, and ancillary educational programmes;
7. Facilitate national collaboration on pharmacist-mediated self care initiatives.

Fédération
Internationale
Pharmaceutique

International
Pharmaceutical
Federation