Pharmacist Competencies and Background

(see [http://www.napra.org/docs/0/95/123.asp](http://www.napra.org/docs/0/95/123.asp) for more detailed standards of practice)

The pharmacist is knowledgeable, professional and a skilled communicator

Pharmacists receive an undergraduate university degree after successfully completing courses in:
- biomedical sciences (eg. physiology, microbiology, pharmacology),
- pharmaceutical sciences (eg. medicinal chemistry, toxicology, pharmacokinetics and pharmacotherapeutics),
- behavioural and social sciences (eg. psychology, communications, ethics and illness behaviour),
- administrative pharmacy sciences (eg. pharmacy management and health care systems),
- pharmacy practice (eg. pharmaceutical care, compounding & dispensing, structured patient care practical training)

Following graduation, pharmacists must pass a national exam and obtain provincial licensure. Continued licensure is dependent upon completion of periodic quality assurance exams and evidence of continuing education.

Pharmacists are expected to function professionally through accepting responsibility for their actions and decisions, demonstrating respect for others, placing the best interest of patients before their own self-interest and striving to improve professional competence through appropriate learning.

Pharmacists are expected to effectively use communication skills such as respect, sensitivity, empathy, verbal and non-verbal skills, listening skills and patient-interviewing techniques (including exploring problems, understanding the patient’s perspective, building a relationship, facilitating patient’s involvement) in order to fulfill their required professional competencies. Over the last decade, pharmacy practical training and quality assurance has evolved to emphasize the importance of these patient communication skills.

Pharmacy is a discipline focused on meeting patients’ drug-related needs

Pharmacists are expected to work in partnership with patients and other health care providers, using their unique knowledge and skills to meet patients’ drug-related needs and to achieve positive patient outcomes by maintaining or improving the patient’s quality of life. This is accomplished through:
- developing professional relationships with patients,
- gathering information and assessing its relevance to patient care,
• identifying patients’ desired therapeutic outcomes, identifying patients’ actual and potential drug-related problems,
• developing therapeutic plans,
• recommending therapeutic options, doses, scheduling/administration, required drug devices and compliance aids,
• referring patients to other health care providers when required,
• developing, implementing and fulfilling plans to monitor the patient’s progress towards desired therapeutic outcomes and documenting information.

Pharmacists are expected to assume responsibility for information (drug, disease prevention and health promotion) retrieval, evaluation and dissemination to ensure safe and effective provision of pharmaceutical care and to promote health. This is accomplished through the identification of sources, retrieval and evaluation of relevant information and appropriate organization and dissemination.

Pharmacists are expected to educate individuals to support optimal patient care and to promote health.

Pharmacists meet patients’ drug-related needs in a variety of work environments: community pharmacies, hospitals, primary care practice and specialized clinics.

Pharmacists minimally complete an undergraduate university degree and licensing requirements. Additional training in the form of hospital, community or industrial residencies prepare pharmacists for more specialized roles in those practice areas. Pharmacists completing advanced training, in the form of a Doctor of Pharmacy degree, are prepared for roles in specialized practice, teaching, policy and research. Numerous certificate courses in specific therapeutic areas are available to assist with specialization.

**Pharmacists are responsible to individual patients and the community at large.**

In addition to meeting individual patients’ drug-related needs, pharmacists also have a responsibility to assure appropriate utilization of scarce resources, and to minimize morbidity and mortality of drug-related problems within the community – (eg. by implementing seamless care programs, adverse drug reaction reporting etc).

**The patient-pharmacist relationship is central to the practice of pharmaceutical care.**

In the pharmaceutical care model of practice, a pharmacist and a patient work together in a cooperative, trusting manner to determine what the patient’s needs are and what care should be provided by the pharmacist in order to best meet these needs. This is a movement away from a more paternalistic model where pharmacists decided what patients needed to know. Through developing a covenantal type of relationship with the patient, the pharmacist is able to work with the patient to determine if any drug-related needs exist which are preventing the patient form obtaining his/her desire quality of life.
If any drug-related needs are identified, then it is the pharmacist’s responsibility to ensure that these drug-related needs are met.

Summary developed by Barbara Farrell