

Vision2020- Current challenges & future prospects of community pharmacist

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A community pharmacist is the most pious part of this great pharma profession and that is a proven fact, but friends I do not think that I have got this grand stage of IPC just to glorify my profession. IPA is not running this competition just to give away some prizes to the students. This is a serious effort to frame the future of our profession by taking inputs from those budding pharmacists who will be there serving in 2020. I have got a mission and a responsibility of conveying the thoughts and the vision of the youth to the authorities. So let us start with current challenges. The first challenge in front of the community pharmacist is that he is not equipped in terms of educational standards. Degrees and diploma are completed with an industry-centered approach and these students register as community pharmacist having little knowledge of clinical pharmacy.

The second basic challenge is lack of people awareness, when people do not know that what a pharmacist is what pharmacy is all about, how they will understand the role of a community pharmacist.

I remember that when I was preparing for this NEC finals, I used to go to a research center, a very own research center of mine, which was actually a medical store near my

house. There I encountered a challenge, which was created by a community pharmacist himself, which was "lack of ethics". I saw bribes and schemes promoting the sale of substandard drugs. I saw a total lack of strong political will to enforce laws and regulation." Schedule H" drugs were dispensed without any prescription. Alprazolam and Sildenafil citrate were like OTC products and more on that, if you have done any mistake by taking Sildenafil citrate, you can easily kill that 'unwanted fetus' because 'Mefipriston' was available in just 250 bugs. I saw a world where every thing was seen with a view of profit.

I also remember that one day a person came to that store and asked for a typical Rifampicin, Pyrazinamide and ethambutol combination but the strange thing was that he was asking just for a single tablet. I genuinely told that person that "sir! I think you should buy more of these because Tuberculosis requires at least four to six month of regular therapy but instead of thanking me for saving his life that person got really angry. He fired me by saying that who gave you the authority to call me a patient of T.B. You sure are an agent of those multinational companies who are promoting the sale of these expensive drugs?"

I was speechless because suddenly I was aware of the challenges that a community pharmacist does not possess any authority, he does not possess any dignified social status, he is not backed with legislations and that was my last day in that store when I told that person that proper treatment and medication is available free of cost in GOVT. Hospitals. 30000 crore-rupee pharma industry spending billions for research and development and at the grass root level we are not equipping our community pharmacists.

We are allowing grocers to kill people. So friends with these pathetic facts and example I think that I have created a 'zone of anger' in the minds of all you people sitting here. Please preserve that zone of anger as we move towards the future prospects of community pharmacist. So when I visualize for 2020 first of all I see that the power is in our numbers. Today we are about 560000 pharma specialists and scientist and amongst which 75 %are involved in retail community and hospital sectors and if this ratio continues I see thousands of community pharmacists becoming integral part of the national healthcare programs like Polio vaccination, AIDS awareness chronic disease management etc. I also see community pharmacists penetrating NGO(s) like WHO and serving in towns and villages, serving at the primary level of healthcare. I see community pharmacists selecting therapy, monitoring response, reducing deaths and errors. I also visualize that how a community pharmacist of 2020 will be used as a tool or resource to manage a national epidemic or disaster. IF he can tell a patient of 'chickengunia' that "sir you can't take aspirin", in the same manner why he can't be used in a chemical or biological attack. In 2020 40%of the medicines will be from the biotech sector .These sophisticated medicines will require special counseling monitoring and follow-up by a community pharmacist.

In 2020 the emphasis will be on individualization of therapy. In future community pharmacist will be able to

read patients biological clock or Chronopharmacological condition that is pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics with an additional dimension of time. We all know that sedatives work better if given in night similarly in 2020 community pharmacist will be able to design a specific treatment regimen for a patient of hypertension according to his peak hours of stress. This information will be combined with the genetic individuality and clinical history of that particular patient by a common virtual database. This is my vision 2020 for the community pharmacist but when I discussed my vision with one of my senior faculty member he said that son your vision is quite perfect theoretically but it cannot be achieved because it is not practical.

I was shocked and after rigorous thinking for several hours I finally came to a conclusion that my vision was lacking in three aspects- Ethics Moral leadership and Prescription X. In that context let us talk about mantras and shloks.

Yes!

An obvious question arises that instead of 2020 why am I talking about mantras and shloks? The reason is that the first shlok of 16th chapter of the Geeta is an excellent example of what qualities a community pharmacist should possess. Fearlessness, purity inside in a state of eagerness to acquire knowledge, will to donate, self-control, organizing an event of public interest, self-study and finally the easiness of mind body and voice. If you don't posses these qualities than you are not fit for this pious profession. Additionally the greatest visionary of India honorable president Mr. APJ Abdul Kalam has his own vision 2020 about pharmaceutical sector.

So with ethics of the Geeta moral leadership of people like Mr. President and Prescription X, which is the zone of anger that we have preserved today, we are able to do anything and when I see in the eyes of the young pharmacist having that zone of anger, having enthusiasm and the spirit I can say this with confidence that this vision 2020 will not just be a vision it will be a reality.