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The Future of Personalized Medicine

ND Medina



Pharmacists will be critically important figures in the future of personalized medicine. Pharmacists are well-positioned to improve communication and education, as well as create new roles that address the opportunities within the pharmacy specialty. The role of pharmacists will continue to evolve into a central figure for the implementation of personalized medicine and expand to encompass new roles and approaches that improve patient outcomes.

Patient and provider communication will be revolutionized in the future. There will be all new ways for patients to engage with providers, ranging from telemedicine to messaging systems. In the Ochsner Journal, writers Jennifer Fong Ha and Nancy Longnecker **write**, “A doctor’s communication and interpersonal skills encompass the ability to gather information in order to facilitate accurate diagnosis, counsel appropriately, give therapeutic instructions, and establish caring relationships with patients. These are the core clinical skills in the practice of medicine, with the ultimate goal of achieving the best outcome and patient satisfaction, which are essential for the effective delivery of health care.”

But how will these communications between provider and patient evolve to achieve this goal?

“As clinicians and educators, we know that increasing our patients’ knowledge about their current risk factors while facilitating collaboration with them to achieve their health goals can improve clinical outcomes. Patients’ active use of e-mail, the Internet, PHRs, and social media can improve access to care, enhance patient education, facilitate screening programs, and increase adherence to treatment plans, especially when integrated within the context of an effective provider-patient relationship,” **writes** Jackie L. Boucher in Diabetes Spectrum.

These communications will continue to shift the locus of power from providers to patients, empowering patients with access to their own health data and information, and maximizing their opportunities to make decisions for themselves.

With these advancements, there will be an increase in the need to educate patients. Instead of dispensing knowledge from on high, providers will need to be on the ground with patients, hand-in-hand.

Thanks to advancements in medications and specialties, pharmacists will play a central role in the future of personalized medicine. “Numerous authors have noted that clinical pharmacists are well-positioned, both by training and placement, within the health care delivery system to play an essential role managing these innovative treatments,” **wrote** Steven Schwartz in Pharmacy Times.

These personalized medicines focus on treatments for an individual patient, customized and unique to each patient, as not every drug or treatment plan works for every person. **According to PharmaForum**, there are four major points to make about the future of personalized medicine:

- Personalized medicine will come in handy to treat every disease
- Personalized medicine will mean that one drug can hit multiple disease targets
- Personalized medicine will reduce or remove side effects
- Personalized medicine will jump ahead of regulations

“Given that many of the recent therapy advancements are centered around patients living with complex, chronic diseases often managed with specialty treatments, the placement of clinical pharmacists at the nexus of functional PGx and in specialty pharmacy care makes good sense,” **wrote** Schwartz.

As pharmacists come to embody the future of personalized medicine, they are well-placed to identify opportunities to improve the efficacy of communication as well as empower and educate both patients and providers. Pharmacists will form a bridge from the treatment of complicated and unique diseases to the providers who supply it.

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