

Take pride! Push pharmacists and pharmacy services to the top of agendas

If you want to find out about innovative services and expand your practice, the World Pharmacy Congress is the place to come, says the International Pharmaceutical Federation

This is the first in a series of four articles highlighting what the 2014 World Pharmacy Congress, “Access to medicines and pharmacists today, better outcomes tomorrow”, has to offer.

Did you know that pharmacists are among the five most trusted professions, ranking higher than doctors? At least, they are in Europe, a recent survey of over 18,000 consumers across 12 countries reveals. So it seems public perception of pharmacists is pretty good, but what of our self-image?

“Pharmacy is a wonderful profession, and I suspect that the majority of pharmacists around the world feel good about their career choice,” says William Zellmer president of Pharmacy Foresight Consulting, US. But rather than asking whether or not pharmacists feel good about themselves today, there are other questions to be asked. “Most pharmacists probably base their satisfaction on the situation of the profession today and might not recognise all the threats and challenges to the horizon,” he explains.

Build our image

Mr Zellmer will be speaking at a session on image and self-concept at the World Pharmacy Congress, “Access to medicines and pharmacists today, better outcomes tomorrow”, which will be held from 31 August to 4 September in Bangkok, Thailand. This session forms part of a congress stream focusing on access to pharmacists and pharmacy services, which, for many, is an essential key to good health.

Why are image and self-concept important? “Around the world, pharmacy practice leaders have committed themselves to shifting the primary focus of practice from providing medicines to fostering responsible use of medicines. . . . This transformation requires the public to see the pharmacist as more than merely a purveyor of products and pharmacists to view themselves as clinical practitioners,” Mr Zellmer explains.

He believes “honest self-examination” is needed. For example, asking critical questions such as “Am I practising in a way that makes optimal use of my professional education and training?” and “Does my demeanour convey a sense of professionalism?”. Answers may reveal gaps that pharmacists should commit to correcting. Mr Zellmer also thinks professional organisations should create forums for open discussion of this topic, encouraging practitioners and students to explore key questions. To this end, the

congress is a great starting point.

Increase access, improve adherence

We often hear pharmacists described as an under-used healthcare professional but in some parts of the world there are not enough pharmacists or pharmacies. Even in places with no shortage of pharmacies, the pharmacist is not always available. In another congress session, Nimesh Jhaveri, executive director of pharmacy services at Walgreen’s, will talk about access to pharmacists when the pharmacy is open, and participants will learn ways to design pharmacies and practice models to increase access.

In the same session, Michael Coughlin, CEO of ScriptPro, a company specialising in pharmacy automation, will tackle access when pharmacies are closed, describing technology-based solutions. He says that delegates can expect to find out about how telepharmacy systems operate (“from small scale systems to global networks”), the benefits (“there are more uses than are obvious”), how telepharmacy should be presented to regulators, and how it can be financially justified.

Telepharmacy is an innovative way to provide services but the congress’s forum for innovators offers plenty more. “This year’s forum will assist national organisations and individual members by developing their expertise and capacity to offer pharmaceutical services implementation programmes that lead to higher implementation. If you want to share experiences, failures and successes, this is the forum to come to. By the end, participants should be able to plan an implementation programme and advocate for it, based on research evidence,” says forum co-chair Charlie Benrimoj.

Perhaps one of the most valuable needs pharmacists can fulfil in terms of health outcomes is that of promoting adherence. Another session is dedicated to this topic and participants will hear about different strategies that can be applied in a number of conditions, from diabetes to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. In addition, Mike Holden, chief executive of the National Pharmacy Association in the UK, will present the evidence behind such strategies.

Include technicians

Part of making pharmacy more accessible is to make the best use of our workforce. This year's congress will also host the third Pharmacy technicians symposium. "FIP recognised the significant role that pharmacy technicians fulfil within pharmacy and the symposium provides a forum to share the work already being done and explore how to develop the role as needed in any given region to fully meet the demands for pharmacy services and access to medicines worldwide," says symposium chair Susan James. The symposium will focus on education models for technicians and the competencies that span current roles but Ms James stresses that it will be of interest to technicians and pharmacists alike.

Demonstrate value

Ultimately, the future success of pharmacy practice depends on demonstrated value. This means pharmacists need to give more attention to measuring, monitoring and managing the outcomes of what they do. And so, if there is any session worth attending, it is "Assisting pharmacists to improve outcomes: a toolkit". This will help participants to list metrics that can be used to measure and manage the impact of their services and to identify methods for better assessment of their true value.

Experience Thai pharmacy

This year's congress is co-hosted by the Pharmaceutical Association of Thailand under Royal Patronage (PAT). Thai pharmacists are providing a service called "family care", which involves reviewing medication in elderly patients' homes. Regular delegates will know that, in addition to a great programme and fantastic opportunities to network with colleagues from around the globe, attending the World Pharmacy Congress is a chance to experience pharmacy in the host country. This year is no different. The Box contains some quick facts you might not know, but come to Bangkok to discover more! "We look forward to welcoming colleagues with our Thai hospitality and will do our best to ensure that every moment will be a memorable one," promises PAT president Sindhchai Keokitichai.

This is the first in a series of four articles highlighting what this year's World Pharmacy Congress has to offer. The congress programme is made up of six streams: Access to medicines; Access to pharmacists and pharmacy services; Access to information; Realising better outcomes tomorrow; Education, education, education; and Special interest symposia. For further details visit www.fip.org/bangkok2014.

LINK for the survey:

<http://www.rdtrustedbrands.com/tables/community.shtml>

<http://www.pharmabiz.com/ArticleDetails.aspx?aid=75262&sid=21>

<http://www.marketresearch.com/Espicom-Healthcare-Intelligence-v1129/Pharmaceutical-Thailand-6977007/>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18315777>

Pharmacy ("ran khai ya") in Thailand

- Thailand has 19 pharmacy schools and pharmacy is a six-year mandatory curriculum.
- The majority (40%) of pharmacists work in hospitals.
- Some community pharmacies operate with a pharmacist on duty for only three hours a day.
- Pharmacists can dispense antibiotics without a prescription.
- Thai pharmacists are working on a vaccine for dengue fever.
- Thailand has a number of marine products research units: products found in its waters are being investigated for anticancer, antimalarial and antitubercular activities.
- Thai officials are battling the abuse of kratom (the red-veined leaves of a medicinal tree), which has psycho-active properties.
- Drugs are classed in three ways: "over the counter", "dangerous" and "strictly controlled".
- Pharmacy technicians are only found in hospitals.
- The Government has issued compulsory licences for patented medicines, which include the HIV treatment Kaletra but also the antiplatelet Plavix, under a public health justification.
- Thailand's pharmaceutical market is predicted to grow at double-digit compound annual growth rate (SUS) between 2012 and 2017.
- The Thai pharmaceutical industry is working on developing GMP Pharmaceutical Inspection Convention standards in order to facilitate export to the EU and US.

Photo gallery



The pharmacist oversees and supports personnel filling and verifying prescriptions at a remote location using a video/audio/data link over a network.

Credit: No credits necessary.



Experience Thai pharmacy
Credits: no credits necessary

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