

## Information: a crucial key to better health outcomes

The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) gives a taste of what is in store for participants at the 2014 World Pharmacy Congress

This is the third 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.

Americans will think twice before buying chocolate. Or, at least, that is the aim of regulations expected in the US this year: the Obama administration’s next tactic in its obesity battle will see five million vending machines display calories. But whether making this information available will yield results is debated. Will people know where to find it? How will they interpret it in relation to their daily nutrition? And is it important to them anyway? Many factors could influence an individual’s decision to eat chocolate and the same applies to health choices like taking medicines. Information is ever increasing, yet a major barrier to informed patients — poor health literacy — remains. For patients to access the information that is important to them, they have to know what to ask. How can pharmacists support them with this? One solution being used is the question prompt list.

“Question prompt lists are structured lists of disease- and treatment-specific questions that can be tailored to a variety of conditions. They are designed to encourage patients to ask questions during consultations and at various points (eg, at the time of diagnosis and initial treatment, or later), aiming to enhance communication, increase patients’ involvement in their own care and foster shared decision-making,” explains Rana Ahmed, a PhD student at the University of Sydney, Australia.

Such lists have been used in oncology and palliative care settings and benefits have been demonstrated in randomised controlled trials: “Patients who were given a question prompt list asked more questions and discussed a greater number of topics with clinicians during their consultations compared with those who received a routine consultation. With particular reference to palliative care, the use of question prompt lists has been shown to facilitate dialogue without creating patient or caregiver anxiety, or impairing patient or clinician satisfaction with the consultation process,” she says.

### Develop advanced skills

Ms Ahmed is one of four speakers at a session exploring this patient empowerment tool, to be held during the World Pharmacy Congress in Bangkok, Thailand. She says there is “great potential” for question prompt lists in pharmacy and that, by the end of the session, participants should be

able to recognise their positive impacts and describe how they can be developed and used effectively. The theme of this year’s congress is access to good health. And since access to information is a crucial key, it makes sense for it to be one of the six congress streams, which Ms Ahmed’s session is part of. She says that, adapted for pharmacy, question prompt lists could be used by community and hospital pharmacists.

Another session within the access-to-information stream looks at the delivery of information and knowledge, which, according to Timothy Chen, associate professor at the University of Sydney, is vital for the future of community pharmacy, particularly for the shift from dispensing to a service provision role. “A core skill for community pharmacists is the provision of medicines information and counselling patients on a broad range of health issues. Increasingly, the expertise of pharmacists in the provision of cognitive pharmaceutical services such as medication management review is being recognised by other healthcare professionals, third-party payers and governments. This means that community pharmacists must also have advanced skills in communicating complex pharmaceutical issues to other professionals,” he says.

Paul Sinclair of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia says that “new technologies will allow rapid access and collation of patient information, and community pharmacy should be the hub for management and dissemination of this information.” He will be sharing experiences of pushing an extended reimbursed role for pharmacists and possible payment models.

### Influence hospital practice

That hospital pharmacists should ensure that patients are educated on the appropriate use of their medicines was one of the statements agreed at the 2008 Global Conference on the Future of Hospital Pharmacy. This congress, held in Basel, Switzerland, drew together over 300 hospital pharmacists from almost 100 countries.

“All of the Basel statements are focused on expressing aspirational goals for the provision of hospital pharmacy services and access to hospital pharmacy services is a common theme throughout,” says Lee Vermeulen, secretary for FIP’s Hospital Pharmacy Section. The statements have

been used to develop practice in countries such as Canada and significant work has been done in the Western Pacific region. However, five years have passed, and it is time to update them to reflect changes that have taken place in hospital pharmacy and to simplify some of the language. “We’re in the midst of a global survey that is seeking advice on revisions . . . and our plan is to do quite a bit of work during the coming months. We will finalise our revisions in Bangkok,” says Mr Vermeulen.

“At this time, I am not sure which of the original 75 statements will be revised, but many are likely to be updated in some way. All participants [at Basel] had an opportunity to contribute to the final statements, and participants at the session in Bangkok will have a chance to influence the revised statements,” he adds. So if you want to influence future hospital practice, Bangkok is the place. Mr Vermeulen points out there are many other sessions relevant to pharmacists interested in hospital practice, but in particular recommends “Pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics at the point of care”, which is being hosted by his section and the PK/PD special interest group.

### Be aware of information on ethnic differences

But access to good health is not only improved by giving patients information or having aspirational statements. It is also about making sure information exists and is shared, so that medicines are used appropriately. A prime example is ethnic differences in drug response. As Geoff Tucker, emeritus professor of clinical pharmacology at the University of Sheffield, UK, explains: “This is a significant issue in drug regulation since demographic, genetic and dietary differences between racial or ethnic groups can be manifest in different average dosage requirements as a result of differences in exposure and intrinsic pharmacological effects. For example, the same dose of rosuvastatin results in three-fold greater blood drug concentrations in Chinese relative to Caucasians. A greater understanding of these differences should allow their prediction with respect to new drugs and less need for the replication of clinical trials around the world, thereby speeding universal access to new medicines.”

He adds: “As a provider of evidence-based drug information, on a global level pharmacists should be aware of the differences in legislation required for the approval of new drugs in their own relative to other countries, especially when dispensing for patients from abroad already on drug or herbal therapy. They should also be aware of potential differences in average drug dosage between racial or ethnic populations and, at the individual patient level, they should have an understanding of the potential risks of interactions between drugs and traditional remedies.” Professor Tucker invites you to the session he is chairing to learn more.

The World Pharmacy Congress, “Access to medicines and pharmacists today, better outcomes tomorrow”, will be held from 31 August to 4 September. Six congress streams offer numerous topics of importance to pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists. For further details visit [www.fip.org/bangkok2014](http://www.fip.org/bangkok2014).

This is the third in a series of four articles on access to health and the World Pharmacy Congress.

#### LINKS

<http://www.fip.org/globalconf>



# Photo gallery



Think twice before buying chocolate

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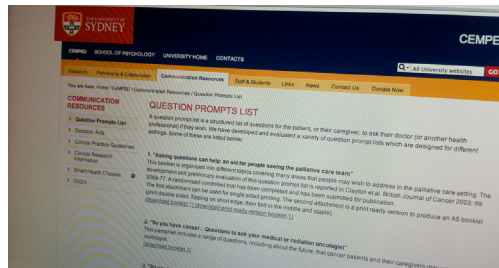
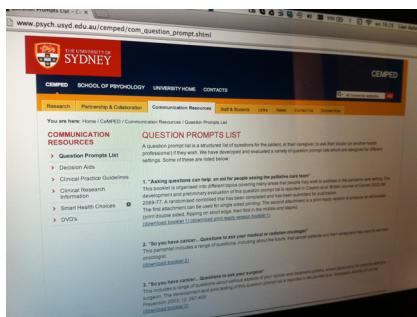


Ethnic backgrounds and differences in drug response

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Question prompts list (no credits needed)

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