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Learning outcomes from patient encounters in the pharmacy practice for students in Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

Tonje Krogstad and Hilde Frøyland*

Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway, and Diakonhjemmet Hospital Pharmacy, Oslo, Norway

The pharmacist is in a position to play an important role in the patient's counselling. Pharmacists should be more conscious on and rather focus on dialogic patient-centered communication instead of just a drug-centered communication. Pharmacy schools worldwide have implemented communication with skills training in their curriculum, although still the focus is on natural science (1-2).

The aim of our study was to investigate what kind of challenges the students experience with interpersonal communication and to identify the students' learning outcomes from patient encounters in the pharmacy practice period at Oslo Metropolitan University.

A total of 77 pharmacy students in their third year of education took part in the study. The task was meant to be done after approximately two months in the internship. The students were told to write a 2-3 pages summary of a self-chosen communication situation with a patient. The data analysis was performed as described by Malterud (3).

Thematic analysis identified four major categories: (1) learning outcomes about one selves, with subcategories *Linguistic adaptations* and *How to behave* (2) learning outcomes about patients, with subcategories *How to encounter patients* and *Learning outcomes about the patients* (3) learning outcomes about pharmacist-patient communication, with subcategories *Communication tools* and *Trust and understanding* (4) factors that affect the patient-pharmacist communication, with subcategories *Communication with third party*, *Doctor-patient communication* and *Time pressure*.

This study showed that the students stated that they have been more aware of the importance of patient-centered communication in counselling during this task; how important it is to be conscious of their own body language, how important it is to divide the information and keep it as simple as possible when counselling patients. Students highlighted that the patients are not intimidating and the importance of summarizing:

What I learned from this communication situation is that patients we meet are not intimidating, and not everyone gets angry if I ask them questions. And I learned that it is very important to summarize because it causes the patient to think through what we went through together and it helps them to get a better overview of their treatment.

Trust and understanding were the two main values the pharmacy students pointed out and considered as fundamental in the dialogue with patients. Many stated that they were very uncertain about how to communicate pharmacological knowledge and what kind of information they should provide.

“At the same time, I was unsure how to explain to the patients the drug mechanism and the interaction mechanism we learned in university, in a popular way”.

Several reported time pressure as a failure that affected the communication with the patients.

In conclusion, working with this task in the pharmacy practice period the students have been aware of the patients' needs, how they are communicating with the patients and how important patient-centered communication is in counselling. Furthermore, this study has shown the importance of focus on how to communicate pharmacological knowledge in the curriculum.

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