

Teaching and Learning Pharmaceutical Code of Ethics as a Syllabus

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Abstract

Pharmacy, being a profession which its activities are directly related to the health and wellbeing of the people and society has been described an ethical profession from earliest time. In the recent decades there has been a shift in the pharmacist role from dispensing to relationship with patients and health care providers and interfere the therapeutic process. Other branches of pharmacy such as producers, distributors and etc. will certainly have the same responsibilities. In this respect, student of pharmacy, besides his professional education needs learning social, behavioral, communicational sciences as well as the principles code of pharmaceutical ethics. Therefore, teaching and learning principles code of ethics seems as an obligation. These principles are a guide to the standards of conduct. Furthermore, rapid progress of biotechnology, nanotechnology and increase cost of new drugs are factors presented the importance of the study of ethics in pharmacy. Therefore, setting syllabus in pharmacy law and ethics is a need for undergraduate and even postgraduate students. The code, therefore attempts to define principles to be born in mind. It is the pharmacist who must interpret them in the light of pharmacy practice.

Keywords: *Code of ethics, Pharmaceutical code of ethics, Teaching, learning*

A glance to the history of pharmacy in Iran

The history of pharmacy as a twin of medicine traced back to the ancient period of Iran. The first writing regarding ancient pharmacy in Iran can be found in the religious books such as Avesta. In this book one of the several types of physician was *gyah-pezes* (herbal healers). In this source numerous medicinal plants and their effects are named (1) and the characters of the physicians and their training are described. Furthermore, some aspects of ethical rules including avoidance of abortion, keeping secrets of the patients may be extracted from the latter text.

Drug preparations and drug store concerned a high rate of importance in Jondishapour University (2) and the first pharmacopeia was written in 9th century by Shapur Sahl the pharmacist of this University. With the establishment of Islam in Iran, different nations were gathered under one emblem and Arabic language became the dominant language of sci-

ence. In this period the medical and pharmaceutical books were translated into Arabic from other languages. Gradually, a brilliant period of medical sciences presented to the world. Iranian scholars played a distinct role in this evolution. These achievements were transmitted to European countries and played role in the Europe Renaissance and global propagation of western medicine and pharmacy (1-3).

Medico-Pharmaceutical ethics in Iran

In ancient Persia (before Islam) the medical beliefs of early inhabitants of Mesopotamia and other nations as well as Iranians integrated into each other and became the basis of Iranian medicine and pharmacy. Later the medico pharmaceutical beliefs of Egypt, India, Greece and China were added to it by trade and war (2). In this period the ethical rules such as rightness, integrity and truthfulness were recommended and medical ethics containing advice, counsel and avoidance from crimes including punishments existed.

In the Islamic period, the medical ethics has been put into further consideration. Many of well-known Iranian Physicians such as Tabari, Razi, and Avicenna allocated part of their book into medical ethics that is beyond of this article to be discussed (3). Hippocratic medical Oath was accepted as a principle code of ethics by Islamic physicians. Haly Abbas Ahwazi, reproduced this Oath in an acceptable manner under the name of Pand-Nameh Ahwazi (Letter of Advice) (4-7).

After the introduction of modern pharmacy into Iran in the 19th century education of ethics comprised minor part of pharmacy education. After the establishment of Tehran University (1934 A.D.) the student of pharmacy was stipulated to an oath to obtain their Doctorate degree.

The first textbook on medical ethics was written by the Late Dr Etemadian (8). In this book several topics including physician patients' relationship abortion, medical vows and ethics are discussed. This book has not been taught in the Faculty of Pharmacy.

In the recent years ethical issues has been put into further consideration. Several seminars have been disposed on ethical issues and dozen proceedings of these seminars have been published by center of study and Research of Medical Ethics.

Teaching the Code of Ethics Society expects from a pharmacist, as a member of treatment circle, to provide his/her knowledge and skills in the proper use of drug to patient, people and public pharmacy, due to its responsibilities against health and well being of the public is an ethical profession. Thus, utilization of pharmaceutical services without pharmacy ethics will culminate to unwanted and even dangerous results. Unawareness of a pharmacist from the role and values of pharmaceutical code of ethics in different domain of pharmacy such as preparation, quality control, distribution, dispensing, pharmacy practice, irrational use of drugs and carelessness to the issues such as AIDS, drug abuse and etc. without regarding

ethical values will certainly bring unpleasant results for the patients, society and in addition to the dignity and social value of the profession. This short introduction reveals that education of ethics and code of ethics for the students of pharmacy at all levels is a need even if the pharmacy laws being well-prepared. A student of pharmacy is certainly in need to be acquainted with the concepts and principles of code of ethics.

Teaching code of ethics is in operation in many schools of pharmacy around the world. Each school prepares its code of ethics according to their social, ethical and cultural standards and is included in its curriculum.

In Iran, several seminars have been held on the medical ethics. In these seminars a few papers were allocated to pharmacy ethics and little was discussed about the importance of education of code of ethics.

Economical issues, commercialism and deep competence in drug market, high price of new drug and other problems demand that a newer approach of teaching laws and ethics put into consideration for a better and more rational pharmacy practice. The topic and syllabus relevant to health care law, patient rights law, patient counsel and confidentiality, ethical concepts and principles and their values in the society health, public trust, as well as the approach of teaching and implication being carefully assessed and explained (9,10).

Pharmacy code of Ethics As mentioned before, patient counseling is the basis of ethical practice for a pharmacist which must be done with highest quality. Since the code of ethics is crucial, teaching the law and ethics should be compatible with other scientific courses that a pharmacist should learn to be qualified for pharmacy practice.

Code of ethics is simply "principles of professional conduct are written to guide pharmacist in relationship with patients, fellow practitioners; other health professionals, and the public" (11).

The code of Ethics is based on the principles such as beneficence, autonomy, non-maleficence,

justice, spirit of inquiry, integrity, trust worthiness, compassion, self-improvement and etc. which explain the ethical issues of a pharmacist (12, 13).

It should be mentioned that such a code of ethics has not been written yet for Iranian pharmacy.

To write such a code, a strategical program should be established by a group of experts with specific consideration of the present problems of pharmacy in Iran.

The Code of Ethics should consider present Acts and Regulations that directly or indirectly influence on professional practice of pharmacy such as drug merchantry, black markets advertising, dietary supplement regulations, drug abuse act, rights of disabled person and many others (14).

Different types of education of ethic should also be evaluated. This lesson can not be taught as theoretical courses in the classroom. The concept and principles of ethics and its implications, distinction between law and ethics and other problems would be better to be discussed vividly with the students in order to be captured by the student (15).

For better understanding of code of ethics, it is better that social and behavioral Sciences and communication skills for drug management also is taught to the student.

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