

## Perceptions Of Professional Expectations About Pharmaceutical Services Among Patients And Pharmacists

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### Abstract

**Background:** Over the past decades, the pharmacist's role has changed from being 'compounders and dispensers' to one of 'medication therapy manager' providing pharmaceutical care (PC). The transformation of pharmacy practice and its benefits, however, seem to be poorly understood by patients and caregivers (consumers) even in advanced health systems. Implementation of pharmaceutical services by applicable standards strongly supports the role of pharmacists in realizing quality pharmacy services; so that the pharmacist is required to build professional expectations in value based on competence and communication skills. **The study aims:** To analyze the professional perceptions of patients and pharmacists towards pharmacy services in pharmacies. **Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional with a quantitative approach was used in KSA; a total of 155 pharmacists and 610 patients from January to July 2022. The method of data analysis is performed descriptively to look at the characteristics and perceptions of respondents regarding competence and communication skills using univariate analysis with SPSS version 28, as further described in the narrative. **Results:** show that as much as 95% of pharmacists already have good competence, and 94% have good communication skills. The patient's perception of the pharmacist's competency and communication skills is good, respectively (94% and 90%). **Conclusion:** suggests that the professional expectations of patients and pharmacists in pharmacy services are good, but the communication skills of the pharmacist need to be improved further.

**Keywords:** pharmacy services, professional expectation, competence, and communication.

### Introduction

Pharmaceutical care (PC) today is defined as, 'The responsible provision of drug therapy for the purpose of achieving outcomes that improve a patient's quality of life <sup>(1)</sup>.' This

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includes pharmacists cooperating with other healthcare professionals to recognize, resolve and prevent medication-related problems to produce therapeutic outcomes for the patient. Over the past decades, the pharmacist's role has changed from that of compounder and dispenser to one of 'medication therapy manager' <sup>(2)</sup>. Apart from traditional technical roles in maintaining institution formulary and supplying medications in a timely manner, the scope of pharmacy practice has evolved to include provision of patient-centric care with extended clinical functions that include providing medication information and optimizing medication therapy, making up a significant portion of clinical pharmacy practice and PC today <sup>(2)</sup>.

Two Cochrane Reviews have shown that PC with pharmacist-provided services resulted in significantly improved care quality, clinical outcomes and prescribing outcomes <sup>(3, 4)</sup>. These findings are especially important as many health systems worldwide are increasingly confronted with rising prevalence of chronic diseases requiring pharmaceutical interventions that are usually complex in nature <sup>(5, 6)</sup>. The transformation of pharmacy practice and its benefits, however, seem to be poorly understood by patients and caregivers (consumers) even in advanced health systems <sup>(7, 8)</sup>. There were significant differing views between patients and pharmacists on their roles in PC, including fundamental roles in medication management <sup>(7)</sup>. Some patients failed to recognize that pharmacists' roles include sharing of medication information, and forming an active patient-pharmacist relationship. Incomplete understanding of PC, possibly arising from poor health literacy, may result in consumers being unable to gain the full benefits of PC <sup>(9)</sup>.

Despite recognition of PC being beneficial, participants from many studies could not agree on the components constituting PC <sup>(8)</sup>. It is only until recently that marked improvement in comprehensive understanding of PC was observed in the United States, and patients' expectation of pharmacy services has changed to include developing the patient-pharmacist relationship and ensuring medication safety <sup>(10, 11)</sup>. Similarly in other countries, patients today increasingly associate PC quality with its access and provision of safe and effective care as awareness grows <sup>(12, 13)</sup>. Traditionally, pharmacy services had only included dispensing and supplying of medications. A 1997 survey showed that patients viewed quality pharmacy services experientially based on short waiting time, accurate dispensing and reasonable pricing. Many of the important aspects of PC as defined today, such as medication counseling and therapeutic drug monitoring, were notably absent from public expectations <sup>(14)</sup>. With the change in patients' needs and pharmacists' roles over the past decades, it remains unclear if our patients today are aware of the new roles of pharmacists in providing PC, and if their expectations of PC have evolved in similar ways as observed overseas.

In the field of health, communication is crucial to the safety of patients. Communication is the social process of transferring information and understanding to others <sup>(15)</sup>. The pharmacist's ability to communicate with the patient is one of the factors that will create the pharmacist's relationship with the patient. Pharmacists are being charged to be able to provide the KIE that the patient or family of the patient needs to provide solutions to their treatment problems. Professional communication is required by the pharmacist in order to guarantee a more effective patient relationship when providing health care. Quality communication has been proven to have a positive impact on patient health outcomes <sup>(15, 16)</sup>. Patients who are subject to pharmaceutical services should be protected as consumers <sup>(16)</sup>. In the era of rapidly evolving information technology, the demands and desires of the public are increasingly diverse, increasing the demand for the competence of pharmacists in pharmaceutical services, especially in pharmacies <sup>(17)</sup>. Therefore, the knowledge, skills, and interaction of the pharmacist with society become crucial. The interaction of a pharmacist with the public can indicate the quality of the pharmaceutical service in the pharmacy <sup>(18)</sup>.

Good health care is an effort that gives satisfaction as a subjective public statement and produces results as an objective proof of the quality of service received by the community <sup>(19)</sup>. Patient perceptions can be influenced by socio-economic circumstances, time, influence from family or friends, or the level of knowledge in society. This perception is also an important factor for pharmacists to help in developing their role in pharmaceutical services and capital to improve the quality of services <sup>(19, 20)</sup>. Trust will give rise to a perception of expertise or reliability seen from a consumer's point of view based on their experience. Different patient characteristics will lead to differences in perception and judgment of pharmacist services that affect different levels of satisfaction <sup>(21, 22)</sup>. Therefore, this study aimed to know the perception of the professional expectations of the pharmacist toward the pharmaceutical service in the pharmacy. Also, to learn the perceptions of the patient's professional expectations toward the pharmacy service in the pharmacy

## Methods

This study is an observational-descriptive study with a cross-sectional design. Patient respondents also get questionnaires with the same coverage. The study was conducted in KSA from January to July 2022. The ethical approval has been issued by the Ethical Committee of the University. The pharmacy criteria that will be the population in this study are pharmacies that have pharmacists who practice during the opening hours of the pharmacy, provide pharmaceutical services to patients, and are not in the hospital environment. The patient criterion that will be the population is the patient who comes to the pharmacy to obtain pharmaceutical services and is willing to be a respondent to the study. The samples in this study were pharmacists who practiced the profession in pharmacies and patients who came to the pharmacies, using the non-probability sampling method. The study was conducted by observing the pharmacist and the patient who was visiting the pharmacy.

The tool used is a questionnaire developed by researchers based on a library review and discussions, then validated. The questionnaire is divided into two categories: the questionnaires of the pharmacist respondents and the questionnaires of the patient respondents. The questionnaire of the pharmacist respondents covers the characteristics of pharmacists and the dimensions of image pharmacist, that is, communication skills. The method of data analysis is performed descriptively to look at the characteristics and perceptions of respondents with competence and communication skills using univariate analysis with SPSS, as further described in the narrative.

## Results

### Descriptive Analysis of Respondent Characteristics

A total of 155 pharmacist respondents and 610 patient respondents met the inclusion criteria. The results of the study obtained data on socio-demographic characteristics of patients such as age, gender, level of education, employment, illness suffered, and frequency of visits to the pharmacy. Data characteristics of the respondent pharmacist, such as age, gender, last education, year of graduation, long practice.

### Descriptive Analysis Professional Expectation Pharmacist

Professional expectations are measured using a questionnaire with variable dimensions of communication skills, and competence. Answers to questions are categorized using a Likert scale of 1–5, that is, never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always. The measurement scale used to measure professional expectations is a categorical scale that is an ordinal scale with 3 categories, namely good (3, 6–5), sufficient (2, 3–<3, 6), and less (<2, 3).

Based on **table (2)** shows that the result of the dimension of professional expectations that the variable competence, obtaining the value of the category well 95% and enough as much as 5%. As a result, variable communication skills have a value of 94% in the category well, 5% in the category enough, and 1% in the category less.

### Descriptive analysis of patient perceptions of Professional Expectations of pharmacy

**services in pharmacies**

The patient as the object of pharmaceutical service requires a pharmacist who is a professional, who has competence, is skilled in non-communication, and also has good decency shown in doing pharmacy work in the pharmacy. Measurement of the quality of pharmacy service by the pharmacists in the pharmacy used a questionnaire with two dimensions, one of which is the competence of communication skills. Responses to items are categorized using a Likert scale of 1 to 5, i.e., never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always. The measurement scale used to measure professional expectations is a categorical scale that is an ordinal scale with 3 categories, namely good (3,6–5), sufficient (2,3–<3,6), and less (<2,3).

Based on **Table (3)**, the results were obtained that patients have a good perception of the competence variable (94%), sufficient (5%), and less (1%). On the communication skills variable, the patient has good perceptions (90%), enough (8%), and less (2%).

**Table (1): Respondent Characteristics**

Categorize		Amount	Percentage (%)
Gender	Men	51	32,90
	Women	104	67,10
Age	21-30	75	48,39
	31-40	64	41,29
	41-50	12	7,74
	>50	4	2,58
Last Education	Bachelor-Apothecary	135	87,10
	Master	20	12,90
Year of Graduation	<2000	2	1,29
	>2010	108	69,68
	2000-2010	45	29,03
Long practice (Years)	<1	23	14,84
	>10	29	18,71
	1-5	66	42,58
	6-10	37	23,87

**Table (2): Professional Expectations Apothecary**

Indicator	Result		
	Good (%)	Enough (%)	Less (%)
Professional Expectation Competence	95	5	0
Ability to communicate	94	5	1

**Table (3): Professional Expectations Patient**

Indicator		Result		
		Good (%)	Enough (%)	Less (%)
Professional Expectation	Competence	94	5	1
	Ability to communicate	90	8	2

**Discussion**

This study obtained an overview of the condition of the pharmacist in carrying out

pharmaceutical services and patient perceptions of pharmacy services in pharmacies. The patient's perception of competence and communication ability that is part of the professional expectations shows that the variables competence and communication skills more than 90% fall into the category of good, which means that the patient considers that the aspect of competency and communication skills by the pharmacists already running well. Based on the pattern of perception between the pharmacist and the patient towards both variables, image pharmacists showed the trend that competence and communication skills, which are the variables in professional expectations, fall into the category both on the overall judgment by the pharmacist and over 90% by the patient.

When comparing the results obtained for the patient's perception of pharmaceutical services in **Tables 2 and 3**, the perception values are not much different. This indicates that the perceptions of the patient and the pharmacist's perceptions in evaluating the pharmacy services provided by pharmacists can be said to be parallel. In line with this, a study conducted in Gondar at community pharmacies revealed that more than two-third of the respondents expect comfortable waiting area (62.2%) and >85% of the clients expect the pharmacist to check prescription for completeness <sup>(23)</sup>. In contrast to this, an article published by College of Pharmacy in Ohio state university showed that patients have a very low expectation on patient counseling services offered by pharmacists <sup>(24)</sup>.

With the explanation of the matter, it is necessary to analyze further whether the patient's perception of the pharmaceutical service provided by the pharmacist can be the only thing to state that the pharmacy service has achieved its purpose and benefits and is judged well by the established standard of service. A healthcare professional's competence is part of professionalism, so it's an absolute must <sup>(25)</sup>. If a pharmacist has considered himself competent, then this is a positive thing for the pharmacy profession. Communication skills variables are one of the challenges for most pharmacists <sup>(18, 26, and 27)</sup>. Optimal continuing professional development is one of the efforts to improve the ability of the pharmacist, which will affect the communication skills of good pharmacists. The ability of the pharmacist to communicate plays an important role in the success of the treatment or therapy effort. In addition, it will also increase the confidence of the patient so that it can improve the quality of public health in general.

This perception of professional expectations is shown by patients at the time of the questionnaire filling session, who express comfort and satisfaction with the pharmaceutical services provided by the pharmacy where the pharmacist practices. Good communication and sufficient competence can be demonstrated by showing empathy for the patient's health condition and also being able to provide solutions to drug therapy-related problems. Information and education are also well given to patients.

### Conclusion

Pharmacists have carried out their professionalism well on the dimensions of competence and communication skills; however, they must always be developed along with the demands of increasingly rapid science and technology. Pharmacists must always be up-to-date so that they can serve patients well and contribute to improving the quality of public health.

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