

Pharmaceutical consulting: a (very) strong value-added shift on the transformation of over-the-counter pharmaceuticals

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Retail pharmacist missions go further than simple distribution or administration of drugs: improving the health of patients by using the most appropriate pharmacotherapy, maximizing the contribution of pharmacists from the health care team, integrating care and pharmaceutical services in all health care areas and now/more recently contributing to form a government policy that integrates these healthcare models and payments into health care benefits.

The Hospital Patient Territories bill ensures that retail pharmacists “contribute to primary care and participate in the cooperation between health professionals” and provide them with the “role of general pharmacist towards certain patients” (art.38). From simple advice to admitting someone in an emergency room, including basic primary care, the pharmacist uses his health care professional skills to serve the patient while referring to their GP. He can also suggest benefits designed to encourage the improvement or upholding of someone’s health. The transition from collective doctors to an individual doctor based on personal needs will accelerate the transformation of over-the-counter pharmaceuticals.

The multichannel offer of retail pharmacists

Retail pharmacists are actually privileged representatives of patients to provide comprehensive and personalized support. Requiring pharmaceutical intervention is common both in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. It is easier to gain access to a pharmacy than to a doctor's medical cabinet, especially accessing a specialist, or even to a multidisciplinary health institution. In addition, the patient, expert of his own illness due to the explosion of the internet, will prefer to contact with a representative that is close by.

The pharmaceutical act and council are therefore designed to become the first gateway for patients in the approved healthcare path. (art. L. 1411-11 of the Public Health Code). Diabetes will be more easily detected in one of the 22,322 dispensaries than by 1,714 diabetes specialists. The pharmacist’s field of action includes chronic diseases (hypertension, diabetes, respiratory failure, obesity) which are priorities in the national health agenda. Going to your pharmacist instead of calling the emergency number “112” will be more beneficial for the patient as he will have access a wider range of benefits.

Pharmacists are positioned within the telemedicine domain due them being called on first

Any person may go to the pharmacy for any of the following specific reasons: blood glucose, blood pressure, peak expiratory flow rate, etc... The pharmacist's mission is to prevent and control such specific reasons, screen and educate patients by offering them local services. A dedicated and confidential space is equipped with the necessary material: screening tests for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), testing for diabetes, stethoscope, dermatological camera, a magnifier, a spirometer, an oximeter, an ECG, a fundus camera, a blood pressure monitor... all connected to a computer via Bluetooth in order to detect a genuine emergency, offer the person a consultation with a physician by videoconference (medical e-consultation) or accelerate the approved healthcare path towards a specialist. Whenever it appears necessary, the pharmacist must encourage his patient to consult a qualified practitioner (art. R. 4235-62 of the Code of Public Health). For example, following a teleconsultation in a pharmacy with a dermatologist, a patient with a suspicious lesion can be seen within 48h to remove a malignant, early stage melanoma before it spreads to other organs. Before entering the approved healthcare path, the corresponding pharmacist can also program an e-consultation with any specialist: psychologist, geriatrician, cardiologist...

An e-prescription as an inter-professional cooperation tool:

Thanks to a close collaboration with physicians, pharmacies can receive or renew medical prescriptions and deliver drugs directly to the patient following an e-consultation. The pharmacist has access to treatments from the past four months as they are pharmaceutical records must be supplied. A software aids dispensing facilitates, after systematic consultation of a patient's history, and detects medication interactions, to avoid side effects and redundancy (art. L. 1111-23 of the Code of Public Health). Therapeutic monitoring is therefore entirely confidential and secure.

The rise of the role of the pharmacist in public health

The pharmacy is developing a new model of service beyond monitoring existing patients on oral anticoagulants and with asthma. Historically, the bulk of the pharmacy's profit was based on the medication sales that are prescribed and reimbursed, which provided professionals in the sector a regular turnover (a rate of 0.53 cent per box of medicine, plus a percentage of the selling price). From 2012, a new method of payment towards pharmacists based on the P4P payment model for doctors has been put into place. Pharmacists will therefore also be paid for the advice they provide. All these new services have the advantage of diversifying the sources of revenue in this sector, address the phenomenon of medical desertification and confirm the role of pharmacists as health professionals.