

Healthcare Professional's Perception of Pharmacist's Relationship and Counseling Skills in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Purpose: To explore the healthcare provider's perception of pharmacist's relationship, communication, and counseling skills in Saudi Arabia. **Methods:** This is a 4-month cross-sectional survey of the healthcare professional's perception of the pharmacist. The survey consisted of two parts: first part gathers demographic information and the second part contains 49 questions divided into four domains. (1) the first domain captures data regarding the healthcare provider's general perception about the pharmacist; (2) the second domain captures data regarding the healthcare professional's perception of pharmaceutical services; (3) the third domain was regarding the healthcare professional's perception of visiting ambulatory care; and (4) the fourth domain captures the data regarding the healthcare professional's perception of pharmacist's relationship and counseling skills. All healthcare professionals responded to the 5-point Likert response scale system. The survey was distributed through social media to more than 1000 healthcare professionals across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Because the survey was in an electronic format, we were able to analyze and discuss the four domains with respect to the healthcare professional's perception of pharmacist's relationship and counseling skills through the Survey Monkey system. **Results:** A total of 170 healthcare providers responded to our survey. Of all the responders, 129 (75.9%) were females and 41 (24.1%) were males. Most of the healthcare providers were pharmacists (81 (47.65%)), others (33 (19.41%)), nurses (27 (15.88%)), and physicians (23 (13.53%)). Most of the healthcare providers (143 (87.2%)) spent less than 16 minutes waiting for the medication from the pharmacy. The average score of the healthcare professional's perception of the pharmacist's communication and relationship skills was around (3.41). The highest score with respect to the pharmacist's and patient's relationship was obtained for the following statements: "The pharmacist politely delivers the medication" (3.96) and "The pharmacist answers questions in an excellent manner" (3.67). The average score of healthcare professional's perceptions of pharmacists with medication counseling skills was around (3.42). Highest scores were obtained for the following statements: "All the medications received were packed" (4.28) and "The patient understands what the pharmacist was saying" (4.14). The highest score with respect to the patient's relationship with the drug information center was obtained for the statement: "The pharmacist answers patient's questions through drug information center of the hospital over 24/7" (3.44) and "Poisonous cases first contact the national drug information center or any other hospital drug information center any time through MOH hotline 937 service over 24/7" (3.37). **Conclusion:** The results of this survey revealed that healthcare professionals had an acceptable perception of the pharmacist with respect to communication and patient counseling skills. The healthcare professional's privacy, easy contact with the pharmacist, and drug-related problems information improve the pharmaceutical services offered to the healthcare professionals in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Key words: Healthcare professional, Perception, Pharmacist, Relationship, Counseling skills, Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia.

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INTRODUCTION

In general, hospitals have various medical professionals including physicians, pharmacists, nurses, nutritionists, social workers, and other healthcare professionals. Each of them has specific roles and responsibilities, and they all wish to provide best care to the patient. The physician sees the patient through the diagnosis; the pharmacist provides the best and appropriate drug for the patient to prevent his/her drug-related problems. The nurses take care of the patient and administer medications. Thus, every member of the team needs to have fundamental skills to provide the best care to the patient. Communication, relationship, and medication counseling skills are very important to all members of the healthcare team. Several studies investigated the patient's perception about the pharmacist's communication, relationship, and patient counseling skills.¹⁻⁴ A previous study has reported the healthcare professionals' perception of the pharmacist in general which involves the pharmacist's communication and relationship skills.² Most of the studies have explored the physician's perception alone, and to the best of our knowledge, there is no study that has included all healthcare professionals' perception of the pharmacist with respect to their communication or relationship skills and medication counseling skills in Saudi Arabia or Gulf and Middle East countries. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to explore the healthcare provider's perception of the pharmacist with the emphasis on communication and relationship skills in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

METHODS

This is a 4-month cross-sectional survey of healthcare professional's perception of a pharmacist. The survey consisted of two parts: the first part captured the demographic information and the second part has 49 questions that are divided into four domains. (1) the first domain is regarding the healthcare providers general perception of the pharmacist; (2) the second domain captures healthcare professionals' perception of pharmaceutical services; (3) the third domain is regarding the healthcare professional's perception of visiting ambulatory care; and (4) the fourth domain captures healthcare professional's perception regarding pharmacist's relationship and counseling skills. All healthcare professionals responded to the 5-point Likert response scale system. There were open- and close-ended questions. The survey was distributed through social media, namely, WhatsApp to more than 1000

healthcare professionals across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A reminder message was sent to the healthcare professional after 2 weeks and additional reminder messages were sent after 4 weeks. The survey was made available via an electronic format, and the necessary information about healthcare professional's perception regarding pharmacist's relationship and counseling skills were analyzed through Survey Monkey system.

RESULTS

A total of 170 healthcare professionals responded to the survey. Of them, 150 (93.8%) was Saudi and 10 (6.25%) was non-Saudi professionals. Of all the responders, 129 (75.9%) were females and 41 (24.1%) were males. Most of them (95.8%) were in the age group of 18–44 years. In addition, 69 (41.6%) professionals were located in Riyadh region, 36 (21.7%) were located in East Province region, and 26 (15.66%) were located in Alhasa region. The highest level of education of the responders was Bachelor's degree (126 (76.4%)) followed by Diploma (16 (9.7%)). Most of the healthcare providers were pharmacists (81 (47.65%)), others (33 (19.41%)), nurses (27 (15.88%)), and physicians (23 (13.53%)). During the past 12 months, majority of the patients visited the pharmacy more than 10 times 53 (31.36%), whereas the others visited at least 5–9 times (40 (23.67%)). Most healthcare professionals visited the pharmacy during the evening time (79 (47.31%)) and during the morning time (54 (32.34%)). Most of them (143 (87.2%)) spent less than 16 minutes waiting for the medication from the pharmacy as explored in Table 1. The average score of the healthcare professional's perception of the pharmacist's communication and relationship skills was around 3.41. The highest score with respect to the pharmacist's and patient relationship skills was for the following statement: "The pharmacist politely delivers the medication" (3.96); "The pharmacist answers questions in an excellent way" (3.67); and "All pharmacists characterized with courtesy and respect" (3.45). The lowest score was obtained for the statement: "Communication with pharmacy by phone at any time" (2.73). The average score of healthcare professional's perceptions of pharmacists with medications counseling was 3.42. The highest score was obtained for the statement: "All the medications received were packed" (4.28) and "The patient understands what the pharmacist was saying" (4.14). Followed by the instruction labeled on each medication (4.05) and All introduction to medications written clearly (3.7). The lowest score was obtained for the statement "The place of pharmacy counseling

Table 1: Demographic information regarding responder qualification.		
	Response Count	Response Percent
Sex		
Female	129	75.9%
Male	41	24.1%
Answered question	170	
Skipped question	0	
Nationality		
Saudi	150	93.75%
Non-Saudi	10	6.25%
Answered question	160	
Skipped question	10	
Age		
<18	0	0.00%
18 - 29	127	75.60%
30 - 44	34	20.24%
45 - 59	7	4.17%
60+	0	0.00%
Answered question	168	
Skipped question	2	
Type of visit		
Physician	23	13.53%
Dentist	4	2.35%
Pharmacist	81	47.65%
Nurse	27	15.88%
Others	33	19.41%
Answered question	170	
Skipped question	0	
In the last 12 months, the number of times visited the pharmacy		
None	6	3.55%
1 time	15	8.88%
2	21	12.43%
3	19	11.24%
4	15	8.88%
5 to 9	40	23.67%
10 or more times	53	31.36%
Answered question	169	
Skipped question	1	
Time of Visiting the Pharmacy		
Morning	54	32.34%
Evening	79	47.31%
Night	34	20.36%
Answered question	167	
Skipped question	3	
The waiting time to get the medications		
< 5	70	42.68%
5-10	53	32.32%

11-15	20	12.20%
16-20	7	4.27%
21-25	3	1.83%
26-30	3	1.83%
31-35	0	0.00%
36-40	1	0.61%
41-45	1	0.61%
46-50	0	0.00%
51-55	1	0.61%
56-60	1	0.61%
more than 60 years or equal	4	2.44%
Answered question	164	
Skipped question	6	
Qualifications of responders	Response Count	Response Percent
Doctorate degree	6	3.64%
Master degree	8	4.85%
Bachelor Degree	126	76.36%
Diploma	16	9.70%
High school	8	4.85%
Intermediate School	0	0.00%
Primary School	1	0.61%
Not educated	0	0.00%
Answered question	165	
Skipped question	5	

Table 2: Healthcare provider's perception regarding pharmacist's communication and relationship skills.

Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
1. When you are receiving your prescription medications, the pharmacist delivers your medicines in a polite way	40	84	35	4	1	3.96	164
2. Pharmacists have technical skills (thoroughness, carefulness, competence).	24	48	43	36	11	3.23	162
3. All pharmacists characterized with courtesy and respect.	32	48	52	24	7	3.45	163
4. The way the pharmacist answers my questions excellent.	32	65	53	9	5	3.67	164
5. Getting through to the pharmacy by phone is comfortable and at any times	12	30	52	36	31	2.73	161
answered question							165
skipped question							5

respect my privacy" (2.61), "The pharmacist explains all the possible side effects" (2.9), and "The pharmacist provides you information about the proper storage of your medication" (2.92) (Tables 2 and 3). The highest score related to the patient's relationship with drug information centers was obtained for the statement: "The pharmacist answers patient question through drug information center hospital over 24/7" (3.44) and "poisonous cases first contact the national drug

information center or any hospital drug information center any time through MOH hotline 937 over 24/7" (3.37) (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

The pharmacy strategic plan at Ministry of Health (MOH) in Saudi Arabia consisted of five goals. The fourth goal of the plan discussed pharmacy, human

Table 3: Healthcare provider's perception regarding pharmacist's patient medication counseling skills.

Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
1. The place of pharmaceutical counseling respects your privacy.	14	26	42	44	37	2.61	163
2. All medications you received packed.	71	75	15	3	1	4.28	165
3. Instructions labeled on each medication	63	67	20	11	4	4.05	165
4. Instructions that contains: (patient's name, medication's name, medication's strength and how to use) written clearly.	48	61	23	21	11	3.70	164
5. The pharmacist provides you written/ or printed information about drug therapy and diseases.	38	63	27	24	13	3.54	165
6. The pharmacist Explains to you how to know if medications are working	28	43	34	42	17	3.14	164
7. The pharmacist explains all the possible side effects	17	44	36	40	27	2.90	164
8. The pharmacist provides you information about the proper storage of your medication.	18	47	30	42	27	2.92	164
9. The pharmacist provides you with thorough medication counseling and encourages you to ask questions.	17	44	44	30	28	2.95	163
10. You understand what pharmacist saying	50	92	14	4	2	4.14	162
answered question							167
skipped question							3

Table 4: Healthcare provider's relationship with drug information centers.

Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
1. Telephone numbers of hospital drug information centers are available and easy to access	16	29	54	51	15	2.88	165
2. The pharmacist answer patient question through drug information center hospital over 24/7	24	44	77	12	8	3.39	165
3. National drug information center provides consultation services and answer questions through MOH hotline 937 over 24/7	18	48	98	2	0	3.49	166
4. If there are any poisonous cases first contact the national drug information center or any hospital drug information center any time through MOH hotline 937 over 24/7	24	47	75	15	3	3.45	164
answered question							166
skipped question							4

resources, and satisfaction of medical culture. The pharmacist shared certain responsibilities with the physician in several programs to improve the services provided to the patient, such as stewardship, antimicrobial services, and pain management services. In addition to the anticoagulation program and MOH evidence base therapeutic guidelines. Despite the collaborations between the pharmacist and the healthcare professional, the perceptions of physicians toward pharmacist was missed. The authors tried in this study to explore the perception of healthcare providers of the pharmacist in communication and leadership. The results showed that healthcare professional's perception of the pharmacist with respect to his/her communication and relationship skills was adequate. The pharmacists showed proper communication

skills with elements such as politely delivering the medicines, respecting the healthcare professionals, and being of them careful, which is a sign of good performance. Moreover, the pharmacist answers the healthcare providers questions. However, the weak point is that the healthcare providers are not available for communication with a pharmacist all the time. This may be because pharmacists will be busy with patients or in telephonic conversation. According to our results, the pharmacists answered the questions in an excellent manner as part of the patient education services, which was found to be lower than what has been reported by Oshima *et al.* This may be because in Oshima's study, pharmacists had good communication with healthcare providers than our site.⁵ The findings of healthcare professional's perception with patient

medication education was acceptable. They received appropriate packages of the medications and the medications were labeled with appropriate instructions and the healthcare professionals could understand the pharmacist's advice. Despite these advantages, the place for patient privacy was the weakest point during patient counseling. In addition, education regarding drug-related problems to the healthcare professionals was other weakness points. This may be because the pharmacist is unfamiliar with them or the pharmacist has not had proper patient medication education program. Our results with respect to patient's perception was found to be higher than what has been reported by Al-Arifi and Merks *et al.*^{4,7} However, they were lower than what has been reported by Jose *et al.* and Schindel *et al.* This may be because of the pharmacist's prior experience in patient counselling services.^{4,6-8} The healthcare professionals showed high perception of MOH hotline with national drug information services and the network of drug information centers. They regularly answer the drug information and poisoning case. The hotline was established in 2014 to respond all patients or healthcare professionals related questions. The national drug information center and the network of drug information centers answer healthcare providers' drug information inquiries. A study was published regarding the analysis of drug information inquiries by healthcare providers and cost avoidance of preventing drug-related problems with healthcare professionals.⁹ However, this study explored the healthcare provider's perception of services that did not exist before; therefore, some findings of this study could not be compared with those published in previous investigations. Within proper health care professional's perception, the pharmacist should expand the pharmacy services and improve the relationships between the pharmacists and healthcare professionals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that healthcare professionals had an acceptable perception of the pharmacist with respect to his/her communication and relationship skills and patient medications education. We need to focus on creating a private area and specific instruction about drug-related problems and complications is necessary to all healthcare providers

in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

ABBREVIATIONS

KSA: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; **MOH:** Ministry of Health.

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