
Pharmacist's Role During The Covid-19 Pandemic

Covid-19 pandemic was caused by SARS-CoV-2 which was first identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. The virus spreads between people especially when people are in close contact with the person who is affected by it. When people cough, sneeze, or breathe heavily, this virus can be spread from an infected person's mouth. Besides that, there are other high risks where people can get the virus by not practicing social distancing and the virus enters their body via the mouth, nose, and also eyes. The virus can also spread from infected people when they sneeze and touch surfaces. Other people can get the virus from the infected surfaces when they touch them and rub it into their eyes or nose without washing their hands first using a hand sanitizer. The coronavirus can cause lung complications like pneumonia, Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS), and Sepsis. The coronavirus can affect all people of ages. According to research, it affects elder people who are more than 60 years old and those who have underlying medical conditions like diabetes and cancer, respiratory disease, and cardiovascular disease. On the 11th March 2020, the World Health Organization's Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared that COVID-19 is a global health pandemic. On 11th March 2020, there were more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries and 4291 people died due to this deadly virus. At that time, China had the highest number of cases which is 80955 cases with a death toll of 3162 deaths. The medical front-liners such as doctors, pharmacists, and nurses work day and night relentlessly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the roles pharmacists had to carry during this pandemic was to stop the spread of misinformation. This is because the spread of fake news is actually dangerous to the public's health. Hence, pharmacists played a pivotal role in nipping the fake news in the bud. For instance, there were many fake myths were circulating around the internet since the outbreak has started. One of the myths that the public believed was being able to hold your breathing for 10 seconds with coughing or discomfort means that you do not have coronavirus. This myth is false because the best way to test whether you are positive to coronavirus is the laboratory test. Coronavirus cannot be detected by the breathing process. Besides this myth, the public also believed that eating garlic would reduce the risk of getting coronavirus. This myth is wrong as there is no evidence until today stating that garlic helps to curb coronavirus. Pharmacists have to provide information on coronavirus from reliable sources, so that, the public understands it and knows how to prevent coronavirus. Sometimes we would laugh when we noticed some supermarkets or pharmacies runs out of face masks and hand sanitizers, this is actually the result of panic buying. Panic buying is due to fake news that is circulating around the internet and also the ignorance of the people.

Apart from this, pharmacists should educate the public on coronavirus and create awareness which is recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO). This because the public should know what they are against and learn the appropriate ways to fight back. For instance, in a war, we should have certain strategies to defeat the enemy in order to gain victory. This also can be applied in this COVID-19 pandemic. As a pharmacist, we should advise the public on how they should manage their minor symptoms by being quarantined in the house for 14 days. If the patient has close contact with the COVID-19 patients, then they should be advised to do the screening at public hospitals or private hospitals instead of visiting the hospital for no

reason. Pharmacists are also the ones providing pieces of information to every single person in the community which includes health practitioners like a nurse on choices of drugs can be used and other symptoms of the virus in proper dose as well as their interactions towards the human body. During this pandemic, there were few videos done by the pharmacists about teaching the public on social media about sanitizer's preparation which was a recommended formula by WHO.

One of the significant roles of a pharmacist during this Covid-19 pandemic is to ensure the availability of medicines. During this pandemic, pharmacists had to identify effective therapeutic alternatives and enforce the implementation of drug shortage as a shortage of drugs may occur due to the prolonged pandemic. Besides prolong pandemic as a factor, shortage of drugs also caused by an obstruction in supply from enriched basic manufacturing countries like India and China. This would be hard for pharmacists as the supply of drugs is in a low quantity. To overcome this situation, pharmacists prioritize medications for patients who really need them. The pharmacists will group the medications in a sufficient amount for the patients with the COVID-19 patients as to limit the number of times the nurse entering the patients' room. Hence, this step will limit the exposure to colleagues and, helps to conserve personal protective equipment (PPE), and also minimize the shortage of staff due to being isolated after being in close contact with the patients.

Due to the pandemic, the pharmacists can only offer pharmaceutical care to the patients. This COVID-19 pandemic has affected a lot of people especially people with chronic diseases like hypertension and diabetes. Pharmacists can only provide counseling for the patients and advise them on how to improve their daily life like in hypertension with BP systolic more than 180mm Hg and diastolic more than 110mm Hg. Pharmacists advise the patients for administration of insulin, regular checking of the levels of blood pressure and blood glucose, and daily exercises. This will help patients to improve their health's condition and prevent them from taking drugs like Warfarin. For instance, for patients who have Venous thromboembolism (VTE), the pharmacists will recommend them international normalized ratio (INR) to patients who are administrating anti-coagulants therapy instead of consuming Warfarin.

Last but not the least, pharmacists also contributed to the COVID-19 screening. In Malaysia, the front liners have to carry out real-time reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) tests to detect COVID-19. This test is usually conducted for the symptomatic patients, and also for the ones who had close contact with the COVID-19 patients. Pharmacists would help the front liners in conducting these tests. Usually, to detect lower respiratory tract infection, samples are taken for the tracheal aspirate and bronchoalveolar tract. Samples taken from lower respiratory tract infection is strongly recommended for patients with severe disease. The results of the swab test only come out after one or two weeks.

In a nutshell, to fight this pandemic against coronavirus or also known as the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the front liners have to work together and willingly take this responsibility. The front liners are working relentlessly and their efforts should be appreciated. The public also should take this issue seriously as we have to opt for the new normal in our daily lives to prevent a spike of COVID-19 cases. Pharmacists are also front liners and they also deserve to receive recognition for their effort in making sure the situation is controlled.

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