



The importance of patient education

Pharmacists are long overdue for recognition as a critical part of the healthcare system, though that is beginning to change. That said, however, I believe we have been our own worst enemies in some cases by not delivering drug therapy information to our patients in language that is easy for them to understand, so they can fully appreciate our value to them.

I serve a broad spectrum of patients, from young families to seniors, but the largest proportion of my patients is in the 50 to 75 age range.

Filling prescriptions safely and accurately is no longer holding significant enough value with the public and government. It has become very clear to me, as I've helped

my patients understand their drug therapy, that our patients value the information we are able to provide, them.

When I started helping my patients understand their medications, I had been assuming they were getting drug therapy information from their doctors, but that turned out not to be the case. Thankfully, pharmacists are now recognizing that their patients value our drug therapy knowledge base, but we need to take the next step. As I said before, our patients won't recognize our value unless we can relate drug therapy information in language that is easy for them to understand.

I've found that when my patients understand how their meds work, they

are highly motivated to be compliant. I have targeted patients on cardiovascular, diabetic and asthma/COPD meds because these are ones with the greatest fear of mortality with their diagnosis. I give closer attention to my diabetic patients, helping them to understand how to effectively self-manage their diabetes with their meds and carbohydrate reduction to help them reach targets and avoid hypoglycemic events.

It amazes me how much my patients appreciate the information I provide when doing med reviews. What I do in helping my patients understand their meds gets back to their doctors and is communicated to their friends, too. When my patients become fans of what I do, they tell everyone, including.....politicians. **PB**

George Pettie BScPharm is owner and pharmacist, Fraser Lake Medicine Centre in Fraser Lake, BC.