

# NEW PERSPECTIVES OF HOSPITAL PHARMACISTS' ROLE IN COMMUNICATING PHARMACEUTICAL POLICY TO HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS AND PATIENTS IN GREECE

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## Background

Given the burden of the economic crisis in Greece, hospital pharmacists have found themselves at a crossroad of different approaches to patient treatment and proposed therapy, in means of both economic and medical aspects.

## Objective

The aim of this report is to highlight the importance of Hospital pharmacists' role in the "**communication chain**" within and beyond the hospital organization.

## Study Design

Everyday practice experience (i.e. frequently asked questions) at the hospital including communication with patients, doctors and hospital administration employees has been taken into account, in addition to the Hellas Health IV survey (Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine).

## Hospital pharmacists' roles in the new era

### Administration

- Balance a limited budget
- Achieve discounts through e-auctions and other negotiating procedures
- Deal with Medication Shortages

### Doctors

- Inform about medication shortages
- Inform about new formulations approved for inpatients' treatment by the Hospital Medicine Committee
- Design new therapeutic protocols
- Check the doses and interaction of medication in a cost cutting/saving manner

### Patients

- Inform about medicine SPC (potential interactions, side effects, proper dose schemes)
- Explain the switch to a generic
- Explain the change of treatment due to shortages

## Results

Everyday experience indicates that the majority of patients does not feel comfortable with changes/ generic substitution in their treatment. Survey results prove that **63%** of the sample is unaware of generic medicine and only **26%** of those who have relevant knowledge realize the generics' therapeutic equivalence to the prototype.

### Frequently Asked Questions by patients

- Are generic drugs as good as brand names?
- Are generic drugs safe?
- Why are the generics cheaper?
- How are newer drugs better than the tried drugs we already use?

- 1.The major concern is routed on the belief that quality and effectiveness have been compromised to make less expensive products.
- 2.Patients that suffer from chronic diseases feel less comfortable with changes, in contrast to those experiencing an acute condition.

### Frequently Asked Questions by doctors/ health professionals

- Which is the drug's country of origin?
- Are there available bioequivalence studies?
- How large are price differences between the generics and the brand-name ones?

- 1.Doctors/ Health Professionals seem to be more concerned in cases of drugs with narrow therapeutic index when these are substituted.
- 2.Generic substitution raises more concerns in case of special patients groups (i.e organ transplant patients receiving immuno-suppressives, epilepsy patients receiving anticonvulsants, cardiac patients receiving antiarrhythmic and anticoagulation therapy).
- 3.Doctors seem more willing to be informed about the actual cost of their prescriptions.

## Discussion

It is possible for hospital pharmacists to **gain resources** by lowering the pharmaceutical cost in hospital care, while **ensuring patient safety**. This requires a closer and well established cooperation with doctors. Besides pharmacists should be prepared to answer all patient questions and insecurities concerning current treatment and data available via internet or other media.

## Conclusions

It is important that hospital pharmacists are aware of developments in health care communication in order to be well informed of on line resources for patient disease treatment and the use of generics. Moreover, required skills in medical and financial issues need to be developed by hospital pharmacists, since they play a **crucial role in the hospital health promotion chain**. Last but not least, it is essential that hospital pharmacists remain mindful of both **patient safety and quality of care**, at all costs.

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