

Pharmacists On The Front Lines During The Covid-10 Pandemic

Being a pharmacist in a community pharmacy has always had it's challenges, and those challenges are magnified by the COVID-19 emergency currently gripping the world.

A good pharmacist tries to stay aware of all aspects of a patient's health, recognizing that each person may need support not just for physical health and wellness, but also mental health and wellness. When I ask someone 'how are you?', I really want to know. Not just how are you managing to stay active and healthy, but also how are you feeling or thinking during these difficult times. Sometimes a supportive word or quiet inquiry opens up a broad area of discussion about someone's current concerns.

I am also aware that although things may feel dire, there are lots of reasons to keep on with regular schedules and to support ongoing goals like quitting smoking, or exercise and weight loss, or medication compliance. It's a real privilege to be able to encourage someone to take charge of their health, and to help them to focus health concerns and navigate the health system in the most effective way.

There certainly is an increase in anxieties during a remarkable situation like the COVID pandemic. Having an accessible health professional, who is able to give accurate information, becomes an important way to manage anxiety and to plan instead of panic. Much of my work as a pharmacist consists of making sure my patients have the best information they need to care for themselves and loved ones. Every day I answer questions that range from availability of items, to best practices in keeping healthy, to queries about changing medications and therapies. I am aware of the fact that people who are not well, or scared or overwhelmed by information, might not behave in ways that they would in ordinary situations. It becomes so important to maintain empathetic listening and to help clarify their concerns. In my patients who already have mental health challenges, there is added responsibility to ensure that each feels comfortable telling me about concerns they have and that they know they can count on their pharmacist to be helpful and non-judgemental.

It is a privilege to serve patients in a community setting like mine. I get to know them well and am able to provide aid in many ways. I have been happy to support my patients with small and large mental health concerns, and each has taught me how to be better at what I do. From simple health concerns to complicated ones, well-controlled to poorly controlled ones, each patient deserves to receive attentive service and some real connection. I'm happy to be a pharmacist in a pharmacy that provides exactly this to each person regardless of circumstance.

If you feel like you are struggling during these uncertain times, I encourage you to speak to your pharmacist, they're accessibility and guidance may be just the support you have been looking for.

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