

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Communication improvement activities of mind-healing mentor-pharmacists

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ABSTRACT

With the advancement of AI and digital technology, including ChatGPT, our lives and the perception of patients as “medical service consumers” are changing in line with other social changes, and the concept of patient treatment is changing rapidly. It is urgently necessary to think about the roles of pharmacist for patients and to seek for the direction of change. We have been making steady efforts to become a “Pharmacists that heals the hearts of patients” by growing the consciousness of pharmacists amidst these changes. Through various activities such as patient counseling committee, customer satisfaction committee, mentor class, learning team activity, and accompanying program, we are promoting mutual understanding among employees and strengthening patient-pharmacist communication capabilities. Cases from the patient counseling committee are loaded onto the hospital’s online education program to be shared with all staff, and the patient counseling committee activities and counseling cases, leaflets are shared with other hospitals. As an activity to improve patient experience, a checklist that can be used in all areas where pharmacists meet patients was developed and applied during counseling. We provided an opportunity to think about the roles of pharmacists for patients’ healthy and happy life. Perceptions of the role of Pharmacists for patient safety are changing. Through various activities and results for effective communication between patients and pharmacists, we can help patients use medicines appropriately and grow into “mentor pharmacists” who can lead patients to solve the root cause of their diseases on their own.

Keyword: communication, mentor-pharmacists

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Received: May 30, 2023

Reviewed: June 02, 2023

Accepted: June 26, 2023

INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of AI and digital technology, including ChatGPT, our lives and the perception of patients as “medical

service consumers” are changing in line with other social changes, and the concept of patient treatment is changing rapidly. Medical consumers who meet pharmacists are people who do not let go of their

smartphones, are familiar with metaverse, and want to ask AI chatbots about their illness and find answers. In addition, policy changes, such as the movement to legislate non-face-to-face treatment, are also being accompanied. It is urgently necessary to think about the roles of pharmacist for patients and to seek for the direction of change. The Department of pharmacy, Seoul National University Hospital has been making steady efforts to become a “Pharmacists that heals the hearts of patients” by growing the consciousness of pharmacists amidst these changes. More than 60% of pharmacists’ work in hospitals is still focused on dispensing [1], but the medical environment is rapidly shifting to a patient-centered one. In this article, We would like to introduce cases of a pharmacist’s communication improvement activity in a pharmacy department of a university hospital to become a mentor-pharmacist who heals the patient’s mind.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Through various activities such as patient counseling committee, customer satisfaction committee, mentor class, learning team activity, and accompanying program, we are promoting mutual understanding among employees and strengthening patient-pharmacist communication capabilities. Since 2017, we have been providing humanities lectures to new pharmacy department employees so that they can look back on themselves, manage stress, grow and help patients live a healthy and happy life. Since 2018, the students of college of pharmacy were included in the subjects of humanities lectures.

In September 2020, a patient counseling committee composed of representatives from each department was organized within the pharmacy department in SNUH (Seoul

National University Hospital) (Figure 1). Through the activities of the patient counseling committee, we have shared cases of counseling with patients or guardians, and have been making efforts to become a “mentor pharmacist” by understanding patients better through discussions on patient-centered communication methods.



Figure 1. The patient counseling committee in SNUH

And in 2021, CS (customer satisfaction) committee and the patient counseling committee in pharmacy department participated in “the 2021 Patient Experience

Improvement Contest” held by SNUH and conducted patient pharmacist communication improvement activities. We searched literatures about pharmacist-patient communication [2, 3] and developed a communication assessment tool(checklist) that can be used in all areas where pharmacists meet patients. Developed tool (checklist) was self-tested two times by pharmacists with some interval.

Starting in 2021, the meeting is being held to develop into a wise person with human character by looking back on oneself, finding self-contradiction, and improving by way of presenting one topic through “mentor class” time and sharing opinions (Table 1). Until 2022, it had been operating for pharmacy executive members, and from 2023, it is expanding to multi-professional mentor class meetings including chief pharmacists and other occupations.

Table 1. Mentor Class contents for sharing (discussion)

Date (Month/year)	Subject
September 2021	A new paradigm of awareness revolution
October 2021	For happy life (Think about who I am)
November 2021	What are the qualities of a good leader?
December 2021	Conversation, Empathy, and Communication
January 2022	Understanding death and changing lives
February 2022	Awakening (Alchemy of the mind)
April 2022	TIME OFF
May 2022	Living with dignity
June 2022	Family
July 2022	Resilience
August 2022	Habit

Date (Month/year)	Subject
November 2022	Mental class for leaders

In addition, since 2022 through the accompanying program for all employees of the pharmacy department (composed of 13 teams), the contents at Mentor Class are shared and mutual understanding is being enhanced among staffs (Figure 2). In 2022, educational contents were prepared to strengthen patient communication capabilities through SNUH Developer learning organization activities. Since 2015, a slogan contest has been held for the activities of pharmacy department for patient safety.



Figure 2. Accompanying program in pharmacy department

RESULTS

As an activity to improve patient experience, a checklist that can be used in all areas where pharmacists meet patients was developed and applied during counseling (Table 2). It consists of a total 13 items that must be observed during patient counseling. A total of 126 self-assessments (1st: before checklist application, n=81, 2nd: after checklist application, n=45) were completed in the field test. In the 2nd self test (after the patient experience improvement activity), the 4 items in Top 6 items which were identified as items that were not normally followed when we meet patients, showed an over 10% improvement in the compliance rate compared with 1st self-test (Involved patients in decision making, Checked that the patient understood my explanation sufficiently, The patient's privacy was respected and consulted, Called the patient by an appropriate title and introduced myself (affiliation and name)) (Figure 3, Table 3).

Table 2. Communication assessment tool (checklist)

Number	Communication assessment item
1	As an expert, we wore a name tag and a neat gown
2	Greeted the patients in a way that made them comfortable
3	Called the patient by an appropriate title and introduced myself (affiliation and name)
4	Showed interest in patient's ideas about their health
5	Listened carefully (Paid attention to the patients)
6	The patient's privacy was respected and consulted
7	Gave the patients as much information as they wanted
8	Explained in a way that was easy for the patient to understand
9	Checked that the patient understood my explanation sufficiently
10	Asked the patients if they have any questions
11	Used warm voice tone and expressed empathy for the patient
12	Involved the patient in decision making
13	Said goodbye to the patient and gave guidance on the necessary parts.

Table 3. Communication assessment tool (checklist)

Communication assessment items (in Checklist)	Compliance rate (%)		Improvement (%)
	1st (before)	2nd (after)	
Checked that the patient understood my explanation sufficiently	57.8	84.4	26.6
Involved the patient in decision making	53.3	73.3	20.0
The patient's privacy was respected and consulted	68.9	84.4	15.5
Called the patient by an appropriate title and introduced myself (affiliation and name)	73.3	86.7	13.4
Used warm voice tone and expressed empathy for the patient	88.9	97.8	8.9

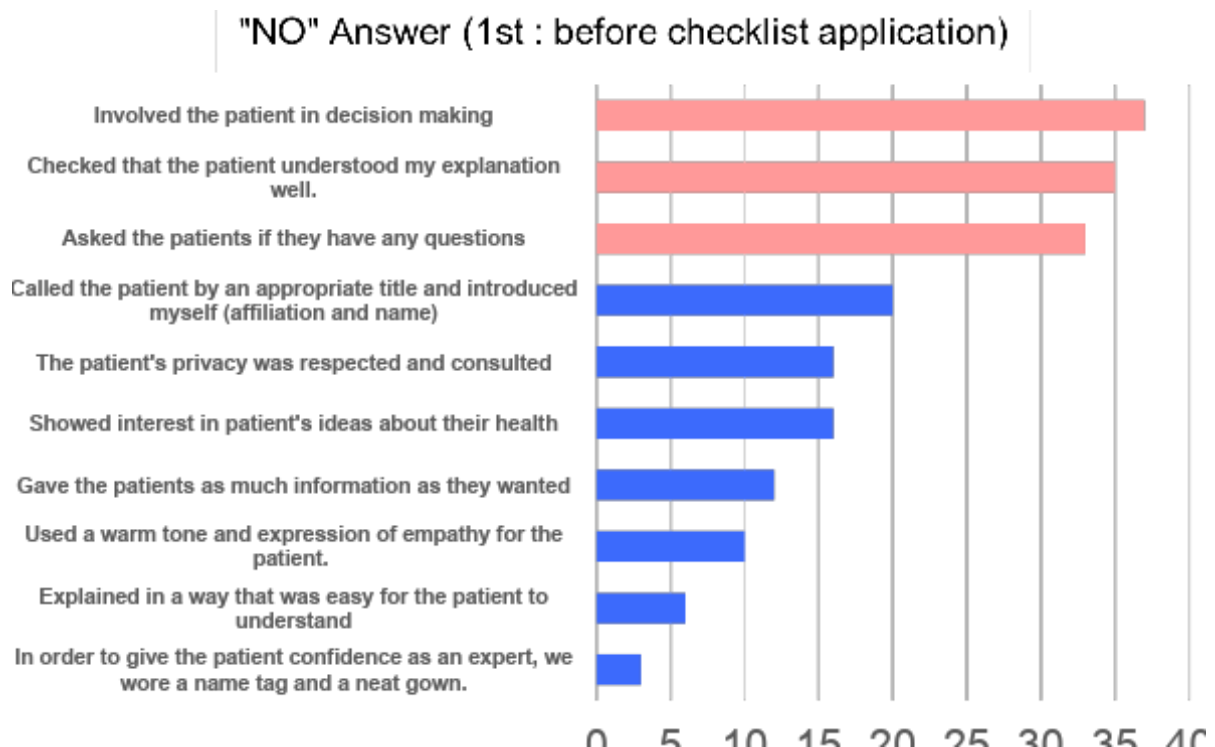


Figure 3. "NO" answer rates in 1st self-test (communication assessment tool)

The contents of the checklist were made into posters (Figure 4) and attached to the counseling room, and roundings were held in each department to improve patient experience (Figure 5), and they pledged to continuously strive for empathy and comfort when communicating with patients.

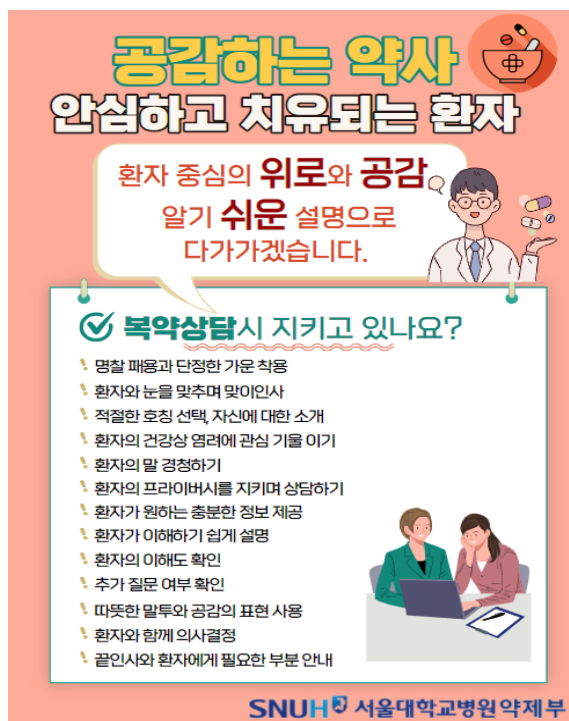


Figure 4. Poster for consistent patient-pharmacist communication improvement activity



Figure 5. Roundings for patient-pharmacist communication improvement activity

14 Counseling cases from the patient counseling committee are loaded onto the hospital's online education program to be shared with all staff (Figure 6, Table 4).

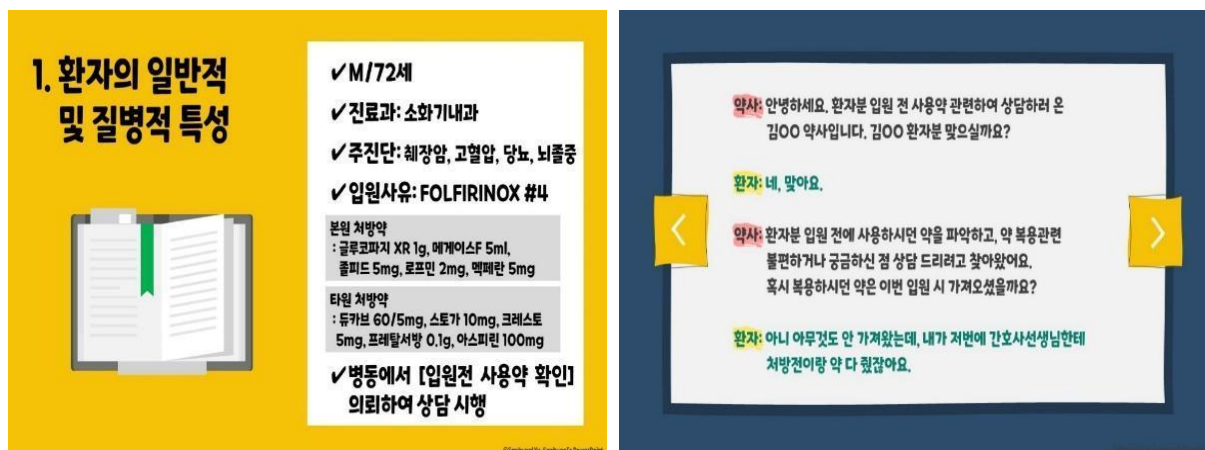


Figure 6. Examples of Counseling cases from the patient counseling committee loaded onto the hospital's online education program

Table 4. Index of counseling cases from the patient counseling committee loaded onto the hospital's online education program

Number	Patient- pharmacist communication cases
1	Counseling for Neurology discharge patient
2	Medication check before admission
3	Inpatient multidrug counseling
4	Counseling for Family Medicine Outpatient (I)
5	Counseling for Family Medicine Outpatient (II)
6	Counseling for patients discharged from the emergency room
7	Anticoagulation drug consultation
8	Counseling for patients in Drug Safety center
9	Severely ill children home medical consultation (I)
10	Severely ill children home medical consultation (II)

A “Mind Healers for Patients” leaflet for patients (Figure 7) is produced and shared with hospital staff and the outside, including the pharmacy department. The patient counseling committee activities and counseling cases are shared with other hospitals through Symposium and lectures (Figure 8).



(Front)

(Back)

Figure 7. ‘Mind Healers for Patients’ leaflet

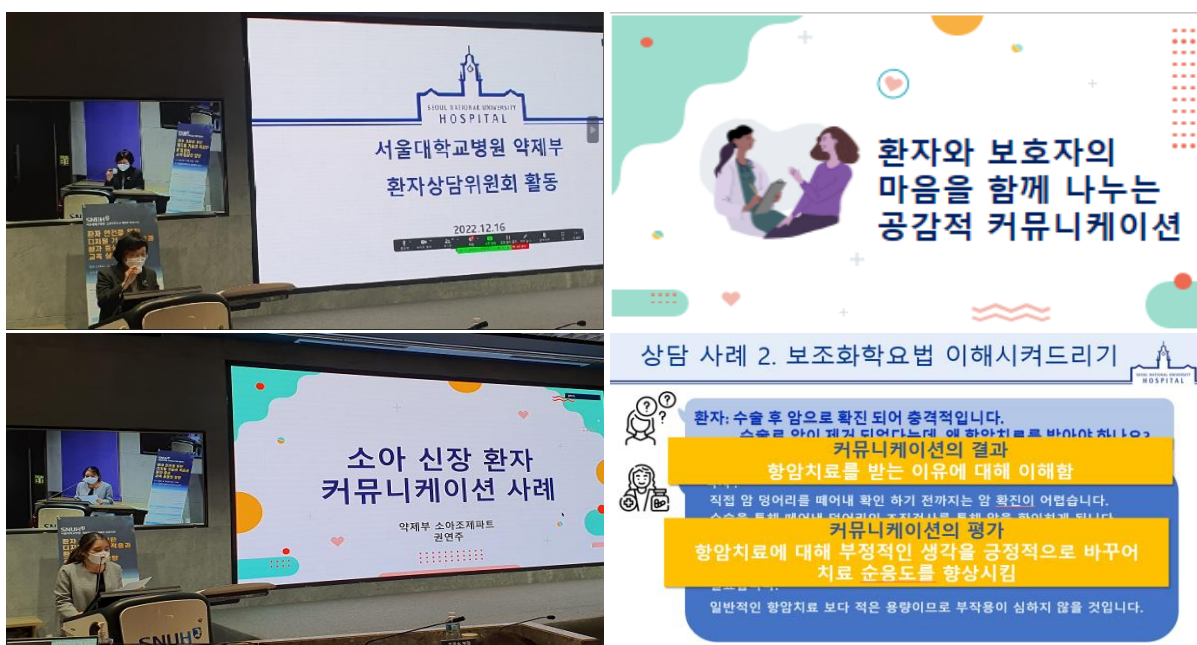


Figure 8. The patient counseling committee activities and counseling cases shared with other hospitals through Symposium and lectures

Sharing these activities to other hospitals and colleges of pharmacy, we provided an opportunity to think about the pharmacist's role for a healthy and happy life for patients. a slogan contest has been held for the activities of pharmacy department for patient safety. In 2022, the slogan in pharmacy department for patient safety was “We practice benevolent art of medicine by caring also for the patients’ mind”. Looking at the slogan from 2015, we can see the changes in the role of the Department of Pharmacy for patient safety. (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Slogan contest of pharmacy department for patient safety (2015~2023)

DISCUSSIONS

The limitation of this article is that it is an activity in the pharmacy department of an university hospital, and it is difficult to evaluate the quantitative effect. Since the cooperation of various professions is necessary for proper patient treatment, future activities will be directed towards participation in multi-professionals, and the

activities are being spread to other hospitals and the College of Pharmacy. “Mentor-pharmacist” is a compound word of mentor and pharmacist. It contains the meaning of becoming a pharmacist who serves as a mentor so that patients can use medicines correctly and solve the fundamental problems of their diseases. It means a change to the role of a pharmacist who helps and guides patients to change, rather than

unilaterally imparting knowledge about medicine. Although there are several limitations to fully complying with the contents of the checklist in a realistic situation, we are making efforts to keep them through the continuous activity of the patient counseling committee.

CONCLUSIONS

We provided an opportunity to think about the roles of pharmacists for patients' healthy and happy life. Perceptions of the role of Pharmacists for patient safety are changing. Through various activities and results for effective communication between patients and pharmacists, we can help patients use medicines appropriately and grow into "mentor pharmacists" who can lead patients to solve the root cause of their diseases on their own.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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