

Editorial

Quality use of antidepressants: how Pharmacists can play their part

Depression is one of the major challenges facing public health. And the impacts of depression on the economy of any nation/individual are in the form of direct and indirect cost. Its high disability rate among people will make it worse by 2020. Youngsters and women are at high risk of getting depressed due to social problems. Depression among elders was found to be associated with medical complications.

In terms of treatment, two options are available for treating depression: one is pharmacological and the second is non-pharmacological. In addition to the choice of drug, the most vital aspect in the management of depression is the right diagnosis, followed by appropriate selection of the treatment. In other words, we can say that therapeutic outcomes are dependant on the accurate diagnosis and safe and effective use of drug. To ensure this, there is a need to counsel the patient about the safe and effective use of antidepressants. It was found that nearly 50% of the patient stops the antidepressant use before the recommended duration, without any professional consultation (Parker, 2002; Garfield et al., 2002). The reasons behind this were the negative attitudes of the patients. Majority were found to believe that the frequent use of antidepressant put them on the risk of addiction to sedation, and that it reduces one's well-being. This will not only affect the quality use of antidepressant (Hoencamp, 2002), but also affect the public attitudes to seek professional help. As a result, it is possible that the patients may consult some traditional and non-professional health care providers which will aggravate the patient status. In addition to these, Okuno et al. (2001) highlighted forgetfulness as a widely reported factor that causes non-compliance with medication (Okuno et al., 2001; Hernandez-Ronquillo et al., 2003; Ponnusankar et al., 2004; Wai et al., 2005).

Role of Pharmacists

Pharmacists can play effective role only if the diagnosis and prescription is appropriate. Pharmacist professional skills are helpful in the following ways:

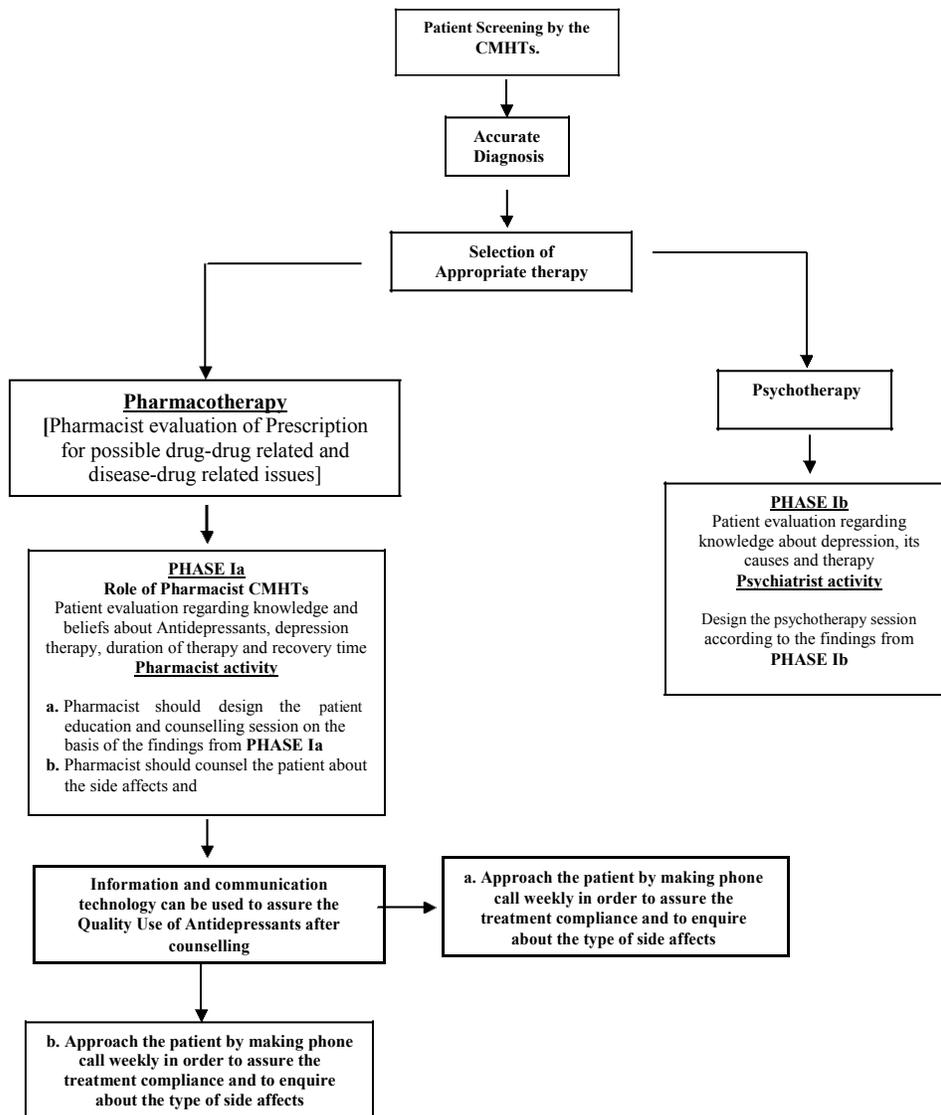
1. To highlight the drug related problems to the mental health professionals and provide the best alternate to lessen drug interactions and adverse effects of antidepressants within the group and with other medicine.
2. Conduct an effective counselling session for the patient and provide him the best possible drug information for the safe and effective use of antidepressants.
3. Counsel the family members to provide the maximum social support to the patient.
4. If the patient is with comorbid medical complication, then pharmacists also play a role in cost reduction by providing the information about the drug interaction and possible side effects associated with the concurrent administrations of drugs.

How pharmacists can establish quality use of antidepressants

The emergence of pharmacy practice has opened new horizons for pharmacists. Nowadays, pharmacists are not only involved in dispensing, pharmaceutical industry and retail pharmacy but also effectively provide the skills in patient and community care as clinical pharmacists. However, in the context of mental health care findings, Simon et al. (2007) has highlighted a question whether pharmacists should be considered as essential and legitimate members of interdisciplinary community mental health teams (CMHTs). If this issue is left as a question, then no one will be willing to test the capabilities of the pharmacists in CMHTs. The work advocates that pharmacists are capable of fulfilling a vital role in CMHTs. It depends on the opportunities provided them. Model 1 illustrates the possible services that they can fulfil in CMHTs of any primary and secondary care setup. In addition, they can play a very vital role to assure the quality use of antidepressant at the community level. The model also provides an ideal strategy that can result in a better treatment outcome by making effective use of the information and communication technology.

Recommendation

Randomised trials can be conducted to prove the applicability of this model in multicultural environments.



Model 1. Pharmacist Role in Interdisciplinary Community Mental Health Teams

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