

Role of Pharmacists in Improving Drug Treatments

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Editorial

Problems in pharmacotherapy in elderly patients can derive in an increase of drug adverse effects, hospitalizations and length of stay, morbidity and mortality. There is a great awareness of this problem and much work has been done in order to reduce the polypharmacy and improve the quality of the drug prescription in these patients. With this aim, we have different tools and initiatives, being the STOP-START and Beers Criteria those upstanding. However, it is not easy to implement those criteria or to do perform other measures when confronted with complex treatments. Comorbidity and constant worsening of the pathologies in these patients makes very difficult to reduce in the long run the number of drugs that they have to take. Moreover, new drugs for pathologies that previously had not pharmacologic treatment are constantly marketed.

Therefore, in this complex scene, the joint work of the different professionals related with the drug treatment is of paramount importance. In this group of professionals, pharmacists are one of the best positioned in order to detect drug related problems (DRP) and to have a coordination role. Pharmacists are a central figure in the pharmacological process, because they have the patient

prescription and can contact directly with physicians and nurses. In fact, implementation of Pharmaceutical Care in the different levels of health care has been going on for several decades and many improvements have been achieved. Nevertheless, there are still barriers in the implementation of Pharmaceutical Care, and this is more evident in the area of geriatric health care in both long-term care and primary care.

The development of Pharmaceutical Care has been wider in acute care facilities; this could be due to different causes as the presence of a Pharmacy Service since a longer time, a more numerous staff in the Pharmacy Service and that there has been a longer tradition of collaboration between pharmacists and the other professionals.

Therefore, in the oncoming years, more efforts will be needed in order to obtain real benefits for the patients. The role of Pharmacist should be enhanced as professionals present in the different levels of healthcare, optimizing the Pharmacy Services in the institutions giving health care to elderly patients. In addition, it is primordial to focus on the community pharmacy that has the most direct relationship with the patient.