

HOW TO PERFORM A PHARMACIST'S *BROWN BAG REVIEW*

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INTRODUCTION

By conducting a *Brown-Bag Review*, a unique opportunity exists for pharmacists to apply their clinical pharmacology knowledge in order to directly benefit the general public, and to promote the role of the pharmacist as the health-system's medication expert. A *Brown-Bag Review* is the name coined because consumers are encouraged to place all the medications present in the home into a brown bag and bring them to the review site. The reviewing pharmacist is then in an excellent position to interview the patient and identify where medication and disease state knowledge deficits exist and subsequently providing a medication education session. During the interview session, pharmacists can educate patients by oral and written communication regarding their medications including, brand and generic names, bioequivalency, cost, indications, expected outcomes, contraindications, precautions, adverse effects, drug-drug interactions, drug-food interactions, dosing regimen strategies, routes and methods of administration, and proper storage conditions. Pharmacists can also determine whether patients may be experiencing unwanted adverse effects and can intervene on the patient's behalf with the patient's regular health care provider. Additionally, this is an ideal opportunity for the pharmacist to inspect the patient's medication and discard medication which is unnecessary, old, outdated, deteriorated or otherwise unfit for human consumption.

DESIGN OF A BROWN BAG REVIEW

In the course of contacting professional organizations for advice on conducting a Brown Bag Review, numerous forms were obtained, however, there was a paucity of information regarding the methods required to perform a the review. Most importantly, users of this service must have a means of knowing that the service is available. One venue of communication is via the Internet. On the Internet, registering with various search engines and providing a concise description of the service to be offered accomplishes this goal. For example, one can register with America Online search engine as a site where "A Registered Pharmacist provides personalized answers to medication questions in easy to understand language."¹ The America Online search engine is popular because it reaches a huge segment of the general public. Similar registrations have been completed with other search engines through various bulk registration services. On the Internet, the venue is already taken care of – both the provider and the user are already on the Internet, and the function of the Search Engine is to bring the two together.

When setting up a face-to-face brown bag review, the basic problem is the same, namely how to get the Pharmacist or Pharmacy Organization together with the

patient. In order to accomplish this goal, there are two basic pathways that can be followed. For both of these pathways, a concise description needs to be provided of the service to be offered. The first pathway is to contact community organizations and offers to provide the service at one of their meetings. The second pathway is to place Public Service announcements in both the broadcast and print media, and invite organizations to contact you for the purpose of setting up an event. The reason both pathways should be followed is simple. In the first, groups, which are known to you, are given a direct opportunity to host a Brown Bag Review as an event at a regularly scheduled meeting, or as a separate event. In the second pathway, groups and organizations, which may be unknown to you, are given an opportunity to be made aware of the existence of both your organization and the service you will provide.

Groups that should be contacted can include but should not be limited to Civic Organizations, Church and Synagogue groups, Senior citizens Groups, and perhaps most important of all, Health Care facilities. Health Care Facilities often sponsor community Health fairs during such period's ad National Hospital Week, National Pharmacy Week, and National Poison Prevention Week. These are ideal venues in which to participate.

Once a venue is established, the process of educating the public must begin. Before the event, literature should be prepared which out lines a description of the Brown Bag Review and advises them of what items and information they should bring along to the event. The actual literature can be prepared by the hosting organization or by you, and should be distributed along with any other literature, which is used to publicize the event. Examples would be mailing of literature along with a regular meeting notice, or placing flyers in clinic waiting rooms, hospital lobbies, etc. In addition to providing notification of the event itself, you also need to make people WANT to participate. This means addressing what I refer to as the "What's in it for me?" syndrome. To accomplish this, the literature that is distributed must emphasize the positive benefits that can occur by having a professional sit down and spend time reviewing proper medication use. Literature can also hint at the negatives of NOT reviewing medication use, but these should not be unduly emphasized since some of the negatives can be unnecessarily alarming, and our goal should never be to alarm.

CONDUCTING THE REVIEW

When designing a means to actually conduct Brown Bag Reviews, I created a "wish-list" which would include tools to enable a thorough medication review, and the availability of items, which will make the event attractive to the public. I have adapted this partly from what is in use on a number of Internet sites, which provide this service in some form.

We like to think that we can instantly recall every fact that we have learned in Pharmacy School and subsequently in our various practices. The truth is, however that as human beings we often fall far short of this goal. To help us bridge this gap, we have almost universally embraced the Personal Computer. When answering medication questions on the World Wide Web, I utilize information sources that are reliable and readily available such as Gold Standard Media, Helix, and Mayo Clinic. With such software either pre-loaded into a computer or accessible on the Internet, one can obtain in seconds the latest information on drug actions, interactions, side effects, precautions, etc. By entering a patient's entire list of medications into a database, their entire medication profile can be analyzed nearly instantaneously, and the reviewing Pharmacist can then present the findings in lay language.

When people attend an event such as a health fair, they like to go home with something tangible. As every Pharmacist who has ever attended a Professional Organization's annual convention can attest, pens seem to be universal. In this case, rather than promoting a specific product, a slogan such as "Ask Your Pharmacist" would be useful, since it can serve as a reminder after the event is completed. If the event is to be in a venue where people might bring children, inexpensive child-safe items similarly imprinted might serve to attract people. If the event is to take place in a venue where refreshments are served, these should also be provided. Not to be overlooked are items that are also of true educational value, such as consumer-oriented pamphlets on topics such as Asthma, Diabetes, Heart Disease, Hypertension, Sun-exposure, and Smoking Cessation.

With a "wish-list" created, the next step is obtaining such items. Pharmaceutical companies frequently receive bad press when the media discusses the high cost of medications. What most people are unaware of is the fact that Pharmaceutical Manufacturers have a vested interest in insuring that their medications are used properly. To this end they are often available, through Sales and/or Educational Liaisons to provide assistance for this type of program. Company Representatives should therefore be contacted to see if they might be major sponsors and provide some of the items on the wish list. This can be accomplished in various ways. Representatives might be willing to obtain and make available computer equipment with software preloaded, or to provide the equipment and the necessary on-site Internet connection so that software can be accessed that way. Sponsorship of an

event can also include providing some of the “throw-away” items described above. As for items such as educational pamphlets, these are usually available in limited quantities at low or no cost from Pharmaceutical Manufacturers, government agencies or through individual disease-state organizations. In cases where cost is involved, the per-piece cost is usually minimal.

DISCLAIMER

When conducting any kind of medication review, a disclaimer should generally be employed. The reason is simple. We live in a society, which is quite litigious. Unfortunately therefore, steps must be taken to limit or eliminate liability. As up to date as our information may be, the body of knowledge is constantly expanding. Additionally, much of the advice offered is predicated on the trust that the consumer is being completely forthright with us when discussing their medications, yet this is not always the case. For these and other reasons, most Internet sites providing this or similar services have a disclaimer in which the consumer agrees to waive any liability as a condition of using the service. Since the exposure to liability is similar, I have adapted the standard disclaimer that is used on a number of reputable Internet sites^{2,3,4,5,6} for use when conducting an in-person Brown Bag Review.

PROCEDURE

Upon registration for the Brown Bag Review, the patient should be given a set of forms to fill out. The packet of forms should include a Consent Form⁷ which essentially states that the patient gives permission for your organization permission to actually conduct the review, a Patient Information Profile⁸ which is where the patient provides you with information about himself/herself which is pertinent to the medication history, such as a history of known chronic diseases and medication allergies, and a Disclaimer Form in which the patient states that by utilizing this service you will not be subject to any liability. Our Consent Form additionally gives the interviewing Pharmacist permission to take possession of and destroy any medication which, upon inspection is deemed unfit for use.

During the course of the interview, the Pharmacist will use the Brown Bag Drug Review Report⁹ to determine the patient’s knowledge of each medication that is being taken. The patient will be asked a series of questions regarding each medication including the name, strength, number of doses per day, time of day, etc as outlined on the form. More than one form can be used if more room is needed. From this interview, a Profile is developed which provides not only a medication history but allows an assessment of the patient’s own knowledge of each medication. Upon completion of this portion of the interview, the Pharmacist can then fill out the Drug Intervention Report¹⁰, which essentially is an assessment of findings, and can

indicate whether a further intervention involving the patient's Physician and/or Pharmacist is warranted.

GOALS

As Pharmacists, our ultimate goal should be to ensure that medication is used in an appropriate manner. To this end, at the end of an interview, the patient should be more fully educated as to the names, proper way of taking, uses, and side effects of each medication used. They should also be educated about proper storage of medications. Additionally, patients need to be educated about the dangers of medication hoarding, that is saving unused medication for another time.