

Chronic Disease Management

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A strategy that builds upon the successes of past practices is a pharmacist/nurse collaborative model of chronic disease management.

Nobody wants to have a chronic long-term illness. Unfortunately, most of us will have two or more during our lives. The WHO projects that diabetes deaths will increase by more than 50% in the next 10 years without urgent action. Most notably, they project diabetes deaths to increase by over 80% in upper-middle income countries between 2006 and 2015.¹ A chronic disease is a permanent, non-reversible condition that is expected to require a long period of supervision, observation or care and may interfere with a person's physical, psychological and social functioning.

Our healthcare services have evolved along a "find it and fix it" mentality. This works well for short-term problems, but does not address the complex, on-going needs of people with chronic diseases. As a result, the current care of chronic conditions has been described as a poorly connected string of episodes determined by patient problems rather than the coordinated network of supportive, evidence-based services that would benefit patients, families and healthcare providers.

Healthcare is at a unique crossroad—dealing with a shrinking pool of healthcare professionals, an aging, more chronically ill population, long waits in the ER and a growing number of Canadians

unable to find a family doctor. Chronic diseases are a major driver of the impending crisis and we need to develop strategies to manage the crisis before the healthcare system becomes unsustainable.

A strategy that builds upon the successes of past practices is a pharmacist/nurse collaborative model of chronic disease management. Nurses have a long record of working side-by-side with pharmacists. Their roles are mutually supportive, yet professionally distinct. Nurses have pharmacological training to perform five of the seven steps involved in medication use: transcribing, administering, educating, monitoring and evaluating—perfectly supporting and balancing the pharmacist's expertise of prescribing and dispensing. Together, the combined expertise of these professionals can enhance the client's level of understanding, acceptance and compliance with the medical regimen and self-help solutions. Keeping a patient on a medication that proves efficacious and promotes health and well-being is often the most efficient and effective of all treatment modalities available, but is often difficult to achieve.

Traditionally, client education on the disease process was that the professional was the expert and the patient would be expected to comply with the professional's advice to achieve the best results. More recently, a move to self-management education has shown great results. The patient is the expert in their own lives, so in conjunction with the professional, they set the goals and learn strategies to improve their health.

With eight million people walking through the doors of a pharmacy annually in Canada and with 93% of seniors still living at home, the following statistics are not surprising:

- Seniors represent 12% of the population, yet consume 40% of all



A We Care nurse performing an ultrasound bone density screening of the heel, on a pharmacy client, at an Osteoporosis Clinic.

- prescription medications
- 50% of medications used by seniors are used inappropriately
 - 25% of hospital admissions of patients over the age of 50 years are the result of medication problems

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The pharmacist nurse collaborative model of support and management involves the implementation of regular initiatives that are customized to meet the needs of local communities. These successful programs may include the following components:

- Nurse assessments in the home—a nurse is the eyes and ears of what is actually occurring in the home
- Monthly wellness clinics that

- specifically target diseases
- Facilitation of a series of information sessions for clients and caregivers
- Caregiving Centre—where a nurse is available on specific days for private consultations
- Telehealth homecare—using wireless technology, nurses are able to remotely monitor a client's BP, pulse, blood glucose, blood cholesterol, oxygen and weight
- Immunization clinics—flu, pneumonia, travel vaccines, hepatitis.

Together the pharmacist and nurse achieve greater compliance with medication, identify signs and symptoms of health problems to prevent long-term complications and foster confidence and knowledge in self-management enabling the client to take action to maintain the best possible health.

The key to managing chronic disease is prevention and early detection. Giving the community tools to manage chronic diseases may reverse the trends. Education is the key.

Pharmacists provide an important public service to their community by humanizing illness in a grass roots approach to improving the lives of people living with chronic disease. It improves the awareness of the pharmacist as an educator and someone who deeply cares for the health and well-being of their patients. **CPM**

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Reference
 1. Diabetes Awareness, National Post, Nov. 2006.