

Teaching Future Pharmacists about Prescription Medication Use Container Instructions to Improve Health Literacy & Medication Safety

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Needed improvements in prescription medication labeling to improve health literacy and safety are well documented in the literature.

Additional incentives

- New Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) guidelines emphasize cultural competence and health literacy
- Joint Commission of Pharmacy Practitioners (JCPP) Vision Statement: The Foundations of Pharmacy Practice includes optimizing medication therapy via patient-centered practices

What is the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACCP) doing to address labeling concerns?

AACP

- *Cultural Competence: Closing Gaps and Expanding Access* Interim Meeting 2006
- Call for examples of exemplary practices in serving the underserved
- Curricular framework for addressing special needs of the underserved
- On-line resources linked with web site
- Annual meeting podium & poster sessions

Where do pharmacy students learn about communicating medication instructions?

- Dispensing labs: mechanics of labeling
- Law courses: legal requirements
- Management courses: how to select systems, including dispensing software
- Communication courses: explaining instructions for understanding

Where do pharmacy students learn about communicating medication instructions?

- Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences (IPPE): cultural competence
- Electives: Spanish for Healthcare Providers
- Psycho-Social Aspects of Disease: impact of health literacy on services received

Where do pharmacy students learn about communicating medication instructions?

- Service Learning: overcoming access barriers
- Summer work experiences: unique patient needs seen on-the-job
- Etc. etc.



Why are there still problems with label instructions if pharmacy students graduate realizing there is a problem?

Barriers to making needed changes

- Board of Pharmacy requirements
 - Volume of information for each label
 - Lack of language regulations in some States
- Time required to provide individualized instructions for patients
- Number of pharmacists who are multi-lingual
- Reluctance to make major label construction changes



Examples of what is being done to improve labeling.



Target's Clear Rx

Increased number of dispensing software labeling options

- Label format—information placement
- Font size—readability for all fields
- Language—English, Spanish, etc.
- Auxiliary labels—with or without icons

Summary

- AACP and other national pharmacy organizations are providing faculty and pharmacists with data to demonstrate a need to improve labeling for health literacy and medication safety as well as examples of best practices.

Summary

- Pharmacy students are being prepared to address labeling concerns
- Software is being developed to make the necessary changes
- Selected companies are reinventing labels to improve health literacy and medication safety.

Next step

Continue to work with stakeholders including Boards of Pharmacy to reevaluate requirements for prescription labels to improve health literacy while maintaining safety.

Thank you

