

Annual training keeps pharmacists up to date on latest advances in caring for patients

Annual conferences by Extension Services in Pharmacy bring together clinical pharmacists from throughout the Midwest to discuss state-of-the-art drug treatments with academic and clinical experts. A 2004 program addressed respiratory pharmacotherapy in order to help the 32 million – and growing – Americans with asthma and other similar chronic respiratory diseases. Pharmacists say the programs build their knowledge and skills and benefit the patients and patients' families they serve.

Situation:

There are currently more than 18 million Americans with asthma, an increase of greater than 150% during the course of the previous two decades, placing asthma as one of the fastest growing chronic diseases in the US. The estimated annual cost of asthma is approximately \$13 billion. Affecting more than 16 million individuals, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is the fourth leading cause of death in the US. The direct and indirect costs associated with COPD are estimated to be more than \$30 billion. As highly accessible health care providers, pharmacists seek professional development relative to respiratory diseases to more efficiently and effectively educate patients and families as well as work collaboratively with other healthcare professional to better manage patients with respiratory diseases.

Response:

For 25 consecutive years UW-Madison's Extension Services in Pharmacy (ESP) has conducted a conference targeted to clinical pharmacists from throughout the Midwest. Working collaboratively with a planning committee composed of University of Wisconsin School of Pharmacy faculty, ESP faculty developed this conference by identifying the most appropriate topics within the respiratory disease state in which clinical pharmacists could potentially apply their newly gained knowledge. Instructors included pharmacy/medicine experts, the majority of whom are University of Wisconsin faculty. Program funding was provided through a combination of participant registration fees and educational grants from sources external to the University.

The two-day conference included nine lecture presentations followed by 10 workshops, of which a participant could attend three. Participants can receive up to 12 hours of continuing education towards their registration. While the majority of the 130 registrants practice clinical pharmacy in Wisconsin, persons from seven other states also attended.

Over the past 25 years, approximately 4000 pharmacists have attended annual conferences about their role in current health concerns such as prevention and management of cardiovascular diseases, advances and controversies in oncology pharmacotherapy, management of infectious diseases, and challenges in managing aging patients.

Impacts:

When asked to identify examples of new knowledge, skills, or ideas acquired at the 2004 conference they planned to implement in their own pharmacy practice, participants said:

- Interpretation of spirometry results to differentiate asthma versus chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Information on corticosteroids to provide more efficient counseling
- Discussion with patients regarding environmental factors which impact on asthma
- Am better able to provide recommendations to manage exacerbations of asthma
- Will work with other health care providers to develop/provide written action plans to better manage patients with asthma
- Will use information provided to evaluate effectiveness of current therapy in asthma patients
- Have better tools/skills to counsel patients with regard to the effect lifestyles may have on respiratory diseases
- Patient teaching/counseling is probably the most effective therapeutic intervention pharmacists can offer. I learned multiple things which will assist me in counseling patients which I will utilize to help patients comply with their medication regimen.

Success story:

One participant shared how he was immediately able to put his new knowledge to use in helping patients. He said, "After the conclusion of the conference on Tuesday afternoon, I had to work that evening. My first patient counsel that evening was a 15-year-old high school student with proactive asthma triggered by allergies. The patient had never used an inhaler. Based on skills acquired at the Tuesday afternoon workshop, I was able to provide the patient with appropriate instructions for inhaler use. Later that same evening, I received a written order for a peak flow meter. The doctor had not provided the patient with any instructions. I was able to provide the patient with the most up-to-date information regarding rationale for use and how to use."

Other participants said:

"This was one of the best conferences you have conducted. The information was well presented and useful to all areas of pharmacy practice."

"Great Clinical Conference – I learned a lot to take back to my place of work."

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