

Clinical pharmacy: what to do and what to publish

Clinical pharmacy is closely connected to hospital pharmacy. In some places they are one and the same, and elsewhere they work closely together. But, what do we mean by clinical pharmacy? The European Society of Clinical Pharmacy (ESCP) gave the following definition in its five-year strategic plan of 1999-2004.

“Clinical pharmacy is a health speciality, which describes the activities and services of the clinical pharmacist to develop and promote the rational and appropriate use of medicinal products and devices.”

The aim of the ESCP strategy was to encourage the development of clinical pharmacy throughout Europe. The definition went on to list the principle activities of clinical pharmacists as:

Consultation: analysing therapies, advising healthcare practitioners on the appropriateness of drug therapy and providing pharmaceutical care to patients.

Selection of drugs: defining “drug formularies” in collaboration with doctors and other decision makers.

Drug information: seeking information and critically evaluating scientific literature; organising services for healthcare practitioners and patients.

Formulation and preparation of medicinal products and devices: according to acceptable standards to meet specific patients' needs.

Drug use studies and research in areas such as: drug use, pharmacoepidemiology, patient outcomes.

Pharmacovigilance: monitoring drug safety, collecting and distributing information on adverse events and adverse drug reactions.

Pharmacoeconomics: comparing treatment strategies in terms of cost and effectiveness.

Pharmacokinetics/therapeutic drug monitoring: studying the kinetics of drugs and optimising dosage.

Clinical trials: planning, evaluating and participating in clinical trials.

Dispensing and administration of medicinal products and devices: studying and developing systems that can guarantee greater safety in administration, a reduction in expenditure and a reduction in medicine errors.

Pre- and post-graduate teaching and training activities: providing education programmes for pharmacists and other healthcare practitioners.

This definition contrasts with the one written and approved by the American College of Clinical Pharmacy Board of Regents on 8 April 2005, which states that: “Clinical pharmacy is that area of pharmacy concerned with the science and practice of rational medication use”.

The Board of Regents states that clinical pharmacy is a health science discipline in which pharmacists provide patient care that optimises medication therapy and promotes health and disease prevention. Clinical pharmacy has to contribute to new knowledge that advances health and quality of life. Clinical pharmacists possess in-depth knowledge of medicines that is integrated with the biomedical, pharmaceutical, socio-behavioural, and clinical sciences. Accordingly, they can apply evidence-based therapeutic guidelines, evolving sciences, emerging technologies in order to achieve desired therapeutic goals. Clinical pharmacists assume responsibility and accountability for managing medicine therapy in direct patient-care settings, whether practicing independently or in consultation/collaboration with other healthcare professionals. Clinical pharmacist researchers generate, disseminate and apply new knowledge that contributes to improved health and quality of life.

Within the healthcare system, clinical pharmacists are experts in the therapeutic use of medicines. They routinely provide medication therapy evaluations and recommendations to patients and healthcare professionals. Clinical pharmacists are a primary source of scientifically valid information and advice regarding the safe, appropriate and cost-effective use of medicines.

The difference between the scope of clinical pharmacy in Europe and the US is interesting. However, wherever the research is conducted, and whatever type it is, it needs to be published to reach colleagues and a wider audience. The advances must reach other centres and institutions so that they can be used for the benefit of patients. One way of achieving this is for researchers to submit papers to the *EJHP Science*. All aspects of clinical pharmacy research and development, irrespective of definition, are most welcome. The journal needs a broad scope of articles, to help progress hospital pharmacy.

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