



“One Pharmacist, Many Roles”

Dr Seshnee Moodley

President, SAAHIP

A part of me strongly believes that pharmacists are superheroes. Besides the fact that I can attest to having superhuman skills on most days (sometimes required to get through my tasks), I've often heard others muse about this fact too. Pharmacists are equipped with a vast amount of skills that allow us to practice not just basic pharmacy but to also provide exceptional, quality and safe healthcare to patients and clients. I may be biased (I have even called myself a “rational medicine use avenger”, at times), but pharmacists are one of the most trusted professions who are very accessible to the public and we actually do save lives!

Hospital pharmacists are responsible for medication management, clinical pharmacy services, quality assurance, patient safety and education, research and partaking in training and multidisciplinary teams. We have to be extremely accurate when dispensing and reviewing prescriptions, careful when calculating medicine dosages, quick but cautious when compiling prescriptions, ensure that we are great communicators and be gentle, yet firm with patients while counselling them on medication and adherence. It is our role to ensure that we train and mentor the future of pharmacy as well, whilst ensuring that we are constantly staying abreast of the latest pharmaceutical guidelines and trends. We are strong healthcare advocates and patients see us as a valuable resource. With the provision of all the above information – surely by now, you are also convinced that we are superheroes.

Pharmacists fulfil many different roles and that is our super power indeed. Just like Spiderman, who dons a suit to go out and do wonderful and great things, we put on our dispensary jackets or scrubs and do similar. The general public often associate pharmacists with the traditional community setting, however pharmacy has evolved to other non-traditional roles i.e. oncology pharmacist, consultant pharmacists and pharmacists in quality management, etc. Our roles are not just limited to the dispensary anymore.

Hospital pharmacists are clinicians, the fact which we often forget and we need to start moving out of the confines of the dispensary. As pharmacists we have unfortunately allowed ourselves to not utilise our clinical training to the best of our ability. As custodians of medicine, we are experts in our fields and therefore need to utilise these skills. Most often pharmacists believe that there is a need to have a clinical pharmacy post-graduate degree or course before providing these

skills – I can assure you, as pharmacists, you already possess the basic clinical pharmacy skills, which will allow you to make a positive difference in the wards and to patients.

Ward based pharmacy practice allows patient interaction at the bedside, where meaningful prescription assessments or medicine reconciliation may take place. The pharmacist is able to rationalise the medication prescription, advise on therapeutic drug monitoring and highlight if there are any potential drug-drug or adverse events reactions. The interaction with the patient is immediate and meaningful. The pharmacist is also able to partake in discussions and collaborations with other healthcare professionals; you are able to provide ward level medication stock management, which builds good relationships with nurses whilst also contributing positively to budget by preventing expired ward stock.

Healthcare and pharmacy is evolving constantly and as pharmacists we need to stay abreast of all these changes. The World Health Organization has noted that by the year 2030, we may have a shortfall of at least 10 million healthcare workers. Previously highlighting our value with our vaccine administration capabilities and supply chain expertise during the COVID-19 pandemic, it therefore makes sense in valuing the benefit of a pharmacist even more. All pharmacists, not just those in the hospital or community settings, are part of providing health education, patient safety and good quality healthcare.

“Heroes are made by the paths they choose, not the powers they are graced with” Tony Stark (Iron-Man).

Perhaps I have watched one too many superhero movies, but this has reinforced my belief and analogy that pharmacists possess extraordinary skills that position them to enhance patient care. Every decision, every moment spent with a patient as a trusted healthcare professional carries immense weight and impact. The integral role that we fulfil in these patients' lives must be used to the best of our abilities. Our patients and their families deserve the most that we can offer to them. Whilst walking this path, we need to stay true to ourselves. We must strive to continuously grow and step out of our comfort zones – as that is where we will find the best versions of ourselves.



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