Engaging Community Pharmacists to Improve Breastfeeding Rates

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BACKGROUND

There is a wealth of opportunity for pharmacists to expand their patient care services for new mothers.

-90-99% of women receive at least one prescription in the week following birth.
- Mothers with a wide range of concerns come to pharmacists for advice on: -safe medication use during pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Latching and breastfeeding supplies

Pharmacists are the most accessible medication expert for a breastfeeding woman.1
-Frequent interactions with new and expecting mothers
-Highly visible role in the community
-Knowledge of medication safety

BREASTFEEDING RATES IN PA

Healthy People 2020 Goals for Breastfeeding Compared to the 2014 CDC Breastfeeding Report Card for Pennsylvania

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

45% of pharmacists reported getting inquiries from women about medication safety while breastfeeding on a daily or weekly basis

85% of pharmacists felt somewhat comfortable or very comfortable giving advice to breastfeeding women

58% of pharmacists reported never asking women if they are breastfeeding and 61% of pharmacists thought patients should self-disclose that they are breastfeeding

Pharmacists are putting too much responsibility on the patient to come forward with pregnancy and lactation questions. As a profession we need to advertise that we are reliable, accessible, medication experts who want to reach out to help our patients. By reaching out to patients to determine if they are pregnant or breastfeeding, we can greatly improve a patient’s medication experience and address potential drug therapy problems.

A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

3. IDENTIFYING PATIENTS

- Four periods of time for pharmacists to initiate conversation about breastfeeding: 
- Pre-pregnancy
- Pregnancy
- Delivery
- Post-partum

Ways to identify pregnant/breastfeeding mothers: -patient self-discloses the information
- patient asked as part of prescription drop-off and/or pick-up procedure
- identify women buying prenatal vitamins
- an alert on prescriptions from physicians
- a signature waiver signed by patients stating that they are pregnant or breastfeeding

4. PRACTICE

Set hours when a certified lactation counselor will be on site at the pharmacy to answer questions

Pharmacist-patient relationship is significantly strengthened

The products sold and prescription renewals will produce revenue for the pharmacy

Breastfeeding supplies located near the pharmacy consultation area to allow for convenient access to pharmacists

A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

1. EDUCATION

- Student education on the importance of breastfeeding and adherence
- Rotations for student pharmacists that specialize in women’s health
- Continuing education credit for lactation certification courses
- Access to LactMed and other related resources via pharmacy’s intranet
- Patient education on the pharmacist’s role through - flyers placed in prescription bags
- advertising around the pharmacy
- home calls to patients who are pregnant/breastfeeding

2. COLLABORATION

- More than 85% of RIs and International Board Certified Lactation Consultants would work with pharmacists to promote breastfeeding and provide accurate health information to new mothers2
- Health professionals educated on the role pharmacists can play in a new mother’s healthcare team
- Collaboration with certified lactation consultants and nurses
- Classes and/or drop-in hours staffed by pharmacists and other healthcare professionals

REFERENCES