

The modern pharmacist

The Health Column

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There was a time when your local pharmacy sold everything from painkillers to potpourri, tinctures to trinkets, and the pharmacist was often an elusive individual who worked in an elevated position behind a high counter in the back corner of the store.

Walk into a modern pharmacy and the picture is likely to be very different. In some cases the smiling face of your friendly local pharmacist may in fact be the first to greet you. This week we celebrate World Pharmacists Day on 25 September 2015 and what better opportunity to reflect on the important role of the 21st century pharmacist: 'your partner in health'.



While acknowledging World Pharmacists Day it is also worth reflecting on the work of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. The Society is the peak professional body representing pharmacists throughout Australia. They set the quality standards, ethical code, policies and education that ensure Australia's pharmacy consumers receive the highest quality of care. Pharmacists who are Members of the Pharmaceutical Society bear the post nominal MPS, which is a mark of recognition that they are committed to the implementation of this excellence in practice. Ask your pharmacist if they are an MPS?

Pharmacists are readily accessible, professional healthcare providers. Highly trained, they are experts in medicines and can offer advice on the safe and effective use of these medicines because they understand health and how the body works. Each and every day, pharmacists in every corner of the world act as partners to patients and other healthcare professionals with a shared vision of better health.

In Australia, pharmacy has continued to adapt and evolve with a changing healthcare environment. As the population ages and hospitals are required to service more patients than ever before, your local community pharmacy is increasing its clinical orientation and staking its claim as a primary health destination. You may have already noticed this move beyond the dispensing of medicines into the provision of professional services and tighter integration of the pharmacist into the overall healthcare team.

Medicine reviews and health checks are becoming commonplace in most community pharmacies throughout Australia. These are conducted by pharmacists in an effort to improve patient adherence and increase their knowledge for improved health outcomes. A medicine review allows

an opportunity to sit with a pharmacist to discuss your medicines and your overall health. Health checks provide an opportunity for pharmacists to conduct a short in-store check-up and risk assessment on anything from cardiovascular disease to lung health.

More and more, pharmacists are offering professional services for disease management within the walls of your local pharmacy. From immunisations to wound care, diabetes services to sleep apnoea consultations, pharmacists are keen to offer their expertise and skills in an effort to educate and encourage their customers to take vital steps towards improving their health. Next time you're there why not ask your local pharmacist what services they offer?

Outside of the community pharmacy we all know, the pharmacist's role in the healthcare landscape is expanding as well. Just recently in Australia there has been a big push for pharmacists to become an integrated part of the general practice setting. Soon you will see pharmacists working alongside doctors, nurses and other allied health professionals in your local surgeries, offering their expert advice on medicines and acting as a conduit between healthcare settings that will influence positive health outcomes like never before.

Perhaps you know a pharmacist working in this area already. It is likely that you will see pharmacists appearing in other unique areas of practice in the future as other opportunities for integration that can utilise the unique skills of a pharmacist are explored and realised.

Your local pharmacy remains your health destination and your pharmacist is your local health professional specialising in health checks and other professional services. Some pharmacies also offer consumer-orientated health information through the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Self Care health information.

For the nearest Self Care pharmacy location phone the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia on 1300 369 772, or go to www.psa.org.au 'Supporting practice' then 'Self Care', and then 'Find a Self Care pharmacy'.