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HEALTH CAMP DEVOTED TO BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING AND PATIENT COUNSELING IN INDIA

Introduction

My name is Shrujani, and I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Pharmacy degree at Dayananda Sagar University in Bengaluru. Recently, I had the unique opportunity to volunteer at a health camp organized by the Rotaract Club of Bangalore Aagneya. The camp was held at the Bangalore Cantonment Railway Station with the aim of providing free health check-ups and medical advice to individuals from various backgrounds, including railway employees, daily wage laborers, and residents from economically disadvantaged communities.

Background and Structure of the Health Camp

The Rotaract Club of Bangalore Aagneya is a community service organization dedicated to social welfare and improving the well-being of people in need. This health camp offered a range of basic healthcare services to those who might otherwise have limited access to medical resources. This health camp provided a variety of services, including blood pressure monitoring, dental screenings, and vision checks. The healthcare team was comprised of nurses, dentists, opticians, and a pharmacist —

me.

The camp was set up at the railway station, with different sections dedicated to various health assessments. The primary objective was to evaluate and monitor the general health status of individuals.

My Role as a Pharmacist

As the only pharmacist to participate in this health camp, I had a unique role that encompassed multiple responsibilities. My primary task was to measure patients' blood pressure readings and record their body weight measurements. These basic health indicators provided valuable information that helped guide further advice and recommendations for the patients.

Once the readings were taken, I engaged in one-on-one counseling sessions with the patients. These sessions were designed to discuss the blood pressure results, educate patients about hypertension, and provide advice on medication adherence and lifestyle modifications. My approach to counseling was patient-centered, focusing on empathy, active listening, and clear communication. I wanted to ensure that each patient understood the implications of their blood pressure readings and the steps they could take to improve their health.

Observations and Challenges

During the health camp, I observed a significant number of individuals with elevated blood pressure readings, indicating a high prevalence of hypertension among the attendees. Despite many of these individuals being on anti-hypertensive medication, their blood pressure levels remained high. Upon further inquiry, it became clear that non-adherence to medication regimens was a major contributing factor. Patients admitted to skipping doses, forgetting to take their medication, or discontinuing treatment without consulting their doctors.



I emphasized the importance of strict medication adherence and explained the risks associated with non-compliance, such as increased risk of heart disease and stroke. By highlighting these dangers, I hoped to encourage patients to take their medication as prescribed and maintain a consistent regimen.

Additionally, I encountered a patient who reported a persistent dry cough after starting anti-hypertensive medication. Upon reviewing the medication, I identified it as an ACE inhibitor, a class of drugs known to cause this side effect. I advised the patient to consult with their doctor to discuss alternative medications, ensuring they received appropriate treatment without adverse reactions.

Another patient presented with symptoms of dizziness, easy fatigability, and heavy menstrual bleeding, leading me to suspect iron deficiency anemia due to low hemoglobin levels. I recommended the patient undergo a complete blood count and iron profile testing to confirm the diagnosis and receive appropriate treatment. This experience highlighted the need for thorough patient interviews and the ability to recognize symptoms that might indicate underlying health issues.

Lifestyle and Dietary Recommendations

In addition to blood pressure counseling, I observed varying degrees of overweight and obesity among the patients. This finding underscored the importance of lifestyle modifications to improve health outcomes. During my counseling sessions, I recommended incorporating 30 minutes of brisk walking into daily routines to promote physical activity. Additionally, I advised patients to reduce their salt intake and adopt a balanced diet to help manage lower blood pressure levels.

These lifestyle and dietary changes were presented as achievable goals that patients could implement in their daily lives. By focusing on small, manageable steps, I aimed to encourage long-term health improvements and reduce the risk of complications associated with hypertension and obesity.

Opportunities for Improvement

While the health camp was successful in providing essential services to the community, there were areas for improvement, particularly in terms of follow-up and continuity of care. Currently, there is no system in place to track patients' health progress after the camp. This lack of follow-up could lead to a gap in care, as patients might not receive further guidance or support.

To address this issue, I suggested gathering patient contact information, such as phone numbers or email addresses, to facilitate future communication. This would enable the team to send follow-up messages, remind patients about medication adherence, and offer additional health advice. Implementing a follow-up system could significantly improve patient outcomes by ensuring they receive ongoing support and encouragement to maintain their health.

Conclusion

Participating in the health camp hosted by the Rotaract Club of Bangalore Aagneya was a rewarding experience. It provided an opportunity to contribute to the well-being of the community while gaining practical experience in patient counseling and health education. The camp demonstrated the importance of community outreach in promoting health awareness and addressing the healthcare needs of underserved populations.



Through blood pressure screenings, medication counseling, and lifestyle advice, I attempted to make a positive impact on the health outcomes of the patients. Continued efforts in community outreach, along with a robust follow-up system, are essential to promote the general well-being of the people and ensure they have access to the resources they need to lead healthy lives.

Overall, my experience at the health camp highlighted the critical role pharmacists can play in community health initiatives and emphasized the importance of empathy and clear communication in patient counseling. It reinforced my commitment to promoting health and wellness, both within and beyond the confines of a traditional pharmacy setting.