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Role of Pharmacists In Cancer Care: Medication Safety and Pharmacoeconomic Perspective

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The burden of cancer is increasing globally and in India and it demands high quality care to the patients in order to achieve optimum therapeutic outcomes. Oncology is one of the most important areas where plenty of new drugs are researched and many of them are successfully approved for use in the real world. Due to complexity of the disease and use of multiple modalities multidisciplinary approach is always required in the cancer care. Clinical Pharmacist has broad scope of providing various clinical services to the cancer patients and health care professionals involved in cancer care. Due to abundant amount of research we have plenty of chemotherapeutic agents and targeted molecules in the market. Availability of high number of anti-cancer drugs in the market creates a demand for the most recent, critically evaluated and patient specific information about drugs to the clinicians and patients. Clinical Pharmacist can meet this demand by being a part of health care team and by working as drug information provider. It is well evident that all the anti-neoplastic agents require safety monitoring before initiation of therapy and during therapy as well. Team work of clinical pharmacist with oncologists can always improve the quality of patient safety monitoring throughout the course of treatment. Clinical pharmacists can provide recommendations in form of dosage adjustments, additional supportive care and patient education to ensure patient safety while on cancer treatment. Due to complex nature of cancer care, there is high risk of medication errors to occur and oncology pharmacists can work together with nurses, clinicians and patients to minimize occurrence of these errors. Prevention of medication errors certainly benefits to reduce morbidity, mortality and health care expenditure. Oncology Pharmacist can always maintain their role as medication counselor through active partnership with patients. Oncology Pharmacists can also involve in the patient centered, system centered and regulation centered research with ultimate aim of improving rational drug use. Unlike other clinical disciplines, oncology drugs needs more precautions while its preparation and administration and hence, pharmacist is the key person to manage required precautions by ensuring high quality aseptic transfer of anti-cancer drugs. Pharmacoeconomics, drug utilization, medication errors, Pharmacovigilance and comparative effectiveness research could be the most potential areas for oncology pharmacists to work on. In general, Oncology Pharmacist can be a PRACTITIONER, EDUCATOR, and RESEARCHER in order to promote rational drug use in cancer care.