**Code of Pharmaceutical Ethics**

**Objectives**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to understand and appreciate:

1. The need for ethics and values for a pharmacist.
2. The principles on which pharmaceutical ethics is grounded
3. The behavior and attitude one should cultivate to function as a responsible pharmacist
4. The international scenario with respect to ethical guidelines.

The profession of pharmacy is noble in its ideals and pious in character. The practice of the profession requires an attitude of service and benevolence. The application of ethics is inherent in the nature of all areas of medical practice. The Code of Pharmaceutical Ethics serves as moral guidance to the pharmacist in the conduct of their professional practice in various areas of his duty in relation to people he serves on a day-to-day basis.

Pharmacist operates in a social vacuum imposed by the Pharmacy Act, 1948 which restricts other individuals of the society from practicing the profession. Because of this social sanction it is all the more important that pharmacist uphold the values depicted in this chapter and uphold the professionalism and dignity of the profession. Particularly, he/she has to spend more time and effort is improving his/her competence which is an imperative stated in all ethics statements published by pharmaceutical associations across the world.

Ethics may be defined as “The code of moral principles or the science of morals and that branch of philosophy which is concerned with human character and conduct”. The conduct of individuals in society is governed by Governmental control using law and by social customs and duties. The laws are authoritative instruments which rule over the society, whereas social customs and duties are laid down by societies to help the individual to decide what is wrong and what is right.

The healthcare environment beckons the pharmacist to care and alleviate the suffering of the patient. While performing his duties he should always have an altruistic attitude that puts his patients interests above his own. Altruism is an attitude that exhibits a compassionate and caring spirit without any kind of judgment and discrimination. This attitude is needed especially in medical emergencies arising from natural calamities and war like situations, where he should be ready to sacrifice his rights for the wellbeing of the patient community. He should be ready to serve without any restriction of working hours or pay received.

The lofty ideals set up Charaka, the ancient physician and philosopher explains it further – “even if your own life is in danger you should not betray or neglect the interest of your patients”. These qualities were very much upheld by pharmacists during the Nipah breakout in Kerala in May, 2018, the monumental floods of 2018 and COVID 19 breakout in 2020.

The pharmaceutical production and research of drugs also require very high dedication and sincerity in producing the finest quality drugs complying with international standards as well as resisting the lure of money in falsifying research findings and publishing unverified reports to substantiate the actions of a drug. Honesty is an attribute every person who handles drugs should compulsorily have, whether it be the community pharmacist or the marketing person. Wrong statements on efficacy of the drug or stating incorrect prices can destroy the trust the patient endows on the pharmacist. Thus. it is very important that all persons entering the profession of pharmacy uphold very high ethical standards and values. Professionals should always remember that truth ultimately triumphs as stated by the Father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi.

**Ethical Principles**

1. **Autonomy** is the right of individuals to make decisions about what will happen to their bodies. This is in direct conflict to the principle of medical paternalism. Weak paternalism can be practiced in individuals who do not appear to be autonomous or lacks ability to be.
2. **Informed consent** – disclosure, understanding, voluntariness, competence and consent.
3. **Confidentiality -**  to keep all information about patient secret without divulging to others.
4. **Beneficence/Nonmaleficence**. Beneficence indicates that you act in a manner to do good for another. Nonmaleficence refers to taking due care avoiding harm.
5. **Fidelity** requires pharmacist to demonstrate loyalty to their patients**.**
6. **Veracity** is the ethical principle that instructs pharmacists to be honest in their dealings with patients.
7. **Distributive Justice** refers to the equal distribution of the benefits and burdens of the society among all members of the society.

In case of Pharmacist, the Code of Ethics is framed by the Pharmacy Council of India.

1. **PHARMACIST IN RELATION TO HIS PROFESSION**
2. A pharmacist must be a good citizen. He must uphold and defend the laws of the State and Nation. It is his duty to make others also to fulfill the provisions of the pharmaceutical and other laws and regulations. He should bring to the notice of the concerned authority the individual miscreant who defies the laws.
3. For the above, a pharmacist must have a fair knowledge of the laws relating to his profession.
4. The profession of pharmacy is noble in its ideals and pious in character.
5. Apart from being a career for earning livelihood, there must be an attitude of service and sacrifice in the interest of the suffering humanity.
6. A pharmacist must understand his responsibility and fulfill his duties honourably keeping in mind the well-being of the society. He should keep confidentiality about information, unless required by law and thus maintain confidence of patrons.
7. Pharmacist along with medical practitioners and nurses is bestowed with the responsibility of safeguarding the health of the people. He shall be prepared to serve anytime of the day on emergencies.
8. A pharmacist should not get involved in such activities which are not in consonance with the decorum and propriety of the pharmacy profession. He should help to maintain the fair name of tradition of pharmacist.
9. Pharmacist shall exchange information and service with his fellow pharmacists.
10. Pharmacists should join and take active part in the activity of professional organizations. By doing so, he shall update his professional knowledge and increase moral well-being of pharmacists.
11. Pharmacist shall be friend and guide of the people.
12. PHARMACIST IN RELATION TO HIS JOB

**I. Scope of Pharmaceutical Services**

1. This involves the supply of commonly required medicines without any delay from licensed premises, including at all hours in emergencies.
2. The appearance of the place should reflect the professional character of pharmacy and indicate to the public that the practice of pharmacy is carried out in well-established manner.

**II. Conduct of Pharmacy**

1. Qualified pharmacist must have personal control over the pharmacy.
2. Conduct of pharmacy must be very careful to avoid any risk or error of accidental contamination in the preparation, dispensing and supply of medicine.

**III. Handling of Prescriptions**

1. When a prescription is presented for dispensing, it should be received by the pharmacist without any comment or discussion over it, regarding the merits and demerits of its therapeutic efficiency, should not show any physiognomic expressions.
2. He should answer any question on the prescription to the customers with caution and care. He should not disclose any secrecy of the prescriptions to the customers.
3. He should not add, omit or substitute any content of prescription without the consent of the prescriber.
4. In case of any error or doubt in the prescription, it should be referred back to the prescriber.
5. In such case, the customer should not feel doubt about the efficacy of the prescription or it should not affect the reputation of the prescriber.
6. At the time of dispensing the prescription, he should guide and advice the patient about the use of medicines as per instructions of the prescriber.

**IV. Handling of Drugs**

1. Prescriptions should be carefully and correctly dispensed with drugs of standard quality.
2. All the ingredients shall be measured and weighed accurately.
3. Poisonous substances shall be handled carefully to avoid contamination with other drugs.

**V. Training Apprentices**

1. Senior pharmacists shall extend full facilities to trainee pharmacists, so as to make them as dependable pharmacist.
2. **PHARMACIST IN RELATION TO HIS TRADE**
3. **Price Structure**

Prices charged from customers shall be fair and must be in accordance to th equality and quantity of drugs, including its compounding charges.

1. **Fair Trade Practices**

Pharmacist should not go for cut-throat competition and unethical business, by offering prizes, gifts or charge lower prices. He should not imitate labels, trademarks, logo, signs and symbols of others. If the prescription to be served by another pharmacist has been brought to him by mistake, he should not refuse to accept it and should direct the customer to the right place.

1. **Purchase of Drugs**

Drugs shall be purchased from licensed reputable sources only.

1. **Hawking of Drugs**

Hawking of drugs should not be encouraged. The pharmacists should not make any attempt to get orders for such items. Pharmacies and Drug Stores should not practice the method of self-servicing or counter sales as it may lead to self-medication.

1. **Advertising and Display**

Pharmacist should not display any material, either on the premises or in the press or elsewhere regarding the sale of medicines or medical appliances to the public which is undignified in style or which contains an objectionable matter by law. Lustful, obscene and indecent publications should not be exhibited. Contraceptive preparations except bearing the word “Family Planning Requisites” should not be displayed. The advertisement should not contain the following:

1. A guarantee for therapeutic efficiency
2. An offer to refund money paid
3. An incentive schemes
4. Recommendation of a particular medical practitioner or a hospital
5. Any reference to condemn the products of similar nature of others.
6. **PHARMACIST IN RELATION TO MEDICAL PROFESSION**
7. Pharmacist under no circumstances shall take to medical practice i.e, diagnosing diseases and prescribing remedies. However, in case of accidents and emergencies, he may render first-aid to the victim.
8. Pharmacist shall not recommend a medical practitioner.
9. Pharmacist shall not enter into any secret contract with a physician, by offering him any commission for recommending his drug store to patients.
10. Pharmacist must always keep himself abreast with the modern developments in pharmacy and other allied fields. He should be able to advice physician on pharmaceutical matters and also educate the people for maintaining healthy and sanitary conditions of living.

**PHARMACIST’S OATH**

“I promise to do all I can to protect and improve the physical and moral well-being of the society, holding the health and safety of my community above other considerations. I shall uphold the laws and standards governing my profession, avoiding all forms of misrepresentation, I shall safeguard the distribution of medical and potent substances.

Knowledge gained about patients, I shall hold in confidence and never divulge unless compelled to do so by law.

I shall strive to protect and enlarge my knowledge to contribute to the advancement of pharmacy and the public health.

I furthermore promise to maintain my honour and credit in all transactions and by my conduct never to bring discredit to myself or neither to my profession nor to do anything to diminish the trust reposed in my professional brethrens.

May I prosper and live long in favour as I keep and hold this my oath, but if I violate these sacred promises, may the reverse be my lot.”

**Code of Ethics**

**American Pharmacist Association**

Preamble

Pharmacists are health professionals who assist individuals in making the best use of medications. This Code prepared and supported by pharmacist, is intended to state publicly the principles that form the fundamental basis of the roles and responsibilities of pharmacist. These principles based on moral obligations and virtues are established to guide pharmacist in relationship with patients, health professional and society.

1. A pharmacist respects the covenantal relationship between the patient and pharmacist.

Recognising patient-pharmacist relationship as covenant, the pharmacist has moral obligation in return for the trust to help patients achieve optimum benefit from their medications and be committed to their welfare.

1. A pharmacist promotes the good of every patient in a caring, compassionate, and confidential manner.

A pharmacist places concern for the well-being of the patient at the centre of professional practice. In doing so, a pharmacist considers need stated by the patient as well as those defined by health science. A pharmacist is dedicated to protecting the dignity of the patient. With a caring attitude and compassionate spirit a pharmacist focusses on serving the patient in a private and confidential manner.

1. A pharmacist respects the autonomy and dignity of each patient.

A pharmacist promotes the right of self -determination and recognizes individual self-worth by encouraging patients to participate in decisions about their health. A pharmacist communicates with patients in terms that are understandable. In all cases, a pharmacist respects personal and cultural differences among patients.

1. A pharmacist acts with honesty and integrity in professional relationships.

A pharmacist has a duty to tell the truth and to act with conviction of conscience. A pharmacist avoid discriminatory practices, behavior or work conditions that impair professional judgement and actions that compromise dedication to the best interests of patients.

1. A pharmacist maintains professional competence.

A pharmacist has a duty to maintain knowledge and abilities as new medications, devices and technologies become available and as heath information advances.

1. A pharmacist respects the values and abilities of colleagues and other health professionals.

When appropriate, a pharmacist asks for consultation of colleagues or other health professionals or refers the patient. A pharmacist acknowledges that colleagues and other health professionals may differ in their beliefs and values they apply to the care of the patient

1. A pharmacist serves individual, community and societal needs.

The primary obligation of a pharmacist is to individual patients. However, the obligations of a pharmacist may at times extend beyond the individual to the community and society. In these situations, the pharmacists recognizes the responsibilities that accompany these obligations and act accordingly.

1. A pharmacist seeks justice in the distribution of health resources.

When health resources are allocated, a pharmacist is fair and equitable, balancing the needs of patients and society.

**(Permission to be taken:)**

Ref: “Code of Ethics for Pharmacists.” Am J Health -Sys Pharm 1995; 52:2131. Originally published by American Society of health-System Pharmacists, Inc.

**FIP STATEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

**Codes of ethics for pharmacists**

**Introduction**

A profession is distinguished by the willingness of individual practitioners to comply with ethical and professional standards, which exceed minimum legal requirements.

The role of the pharmacist is continuing to develop. The pharmacist is recognised as the expert on medicines.1 Pharmacists are given the responsibility, within the overall health system, to help people to maintain good health, to avoid ill health and, where medication is appropriate, to promote the responsible use of medicines. They assist patients, their carers,2 and those to whom they provide professional services to gain maximum therapeutic benefit from their medicines. To practice as a pharmacist means undertaking any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses his/her professional skills and knowledge. Pharmaceutical practice is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care, but also includes working in a non-clinical relationship with consumers, patients or carers, in the discovery, development, manufacturing of medicines, in maintaining the supply chain or in procurement, in general management or administration, in education, research, advisory, regulatory, or policy development roles. The code of ethics will therefore apply to pharmacists in all practice settings. At all times, pharmacists should strive to provide the best possible care for consumers, patients and carers, with due regard for the limitations of available resources and the principles of equity and justice. Pharmacists can only fulfil their role if they are afforded the necessary professional autonomy to act in the best interests of patients and carers.

Recognising these circumstances, this statement of professional standards relating to codes of ethics for pharmacists is intended to reaffirm and state publicly the obligations that form the basis of the roles and responsibilities of pharmacists. These obligations, based on established ethical principles, are provided to enable national associations and regulators of pharmaceutical practitioners, through their individual codes of ethics, to guide pharmacists in their relationships with patients and carers, and with other health professionals and society generally. They should also guide individual pharmacists in their daily practice of the profession.

In some settings or jurisdictions, such codes of ethics form the basis for the disciplinary powers of regulators or statutory bodies.

Against this background, and for this purpose, the FIP recommends that:

1. In every country, pharmacist’s associations produce or support the development by competent authorities of an up-to-date Code of Ethics for pharmacists setting out their professional obligations and take steps to ensure that pharmacists comply with the provisions of that Code.

2. Consideration should also be given to contributing to the development of transdisciplinary Codes of Ethics, where the opportunities exist to do so.

3. In every country, institutions offering pharmaceutical education and continuing professional development should include the Code of Ethics, and its underlying principles of respect for the autonomy of persons, beneficence, nonmaleficence and justice, in their offerings for all students and professionals.

4. The obligations of pharmacists formalised in these codes should at least include:

• to act with honesty and integrity in their relationships with consumers, patients and carers, and other health professionals, including pharmacy practice colleagues, and not engage in any behaviour or activity likely to bring the profession into disrepute or to undermine public confidence in the profession;

• to ensure that their priorities are the safety, well-being and the best interests of those to whom they provide professional services and that they act at all times as autonomous health professionals, recognising the challenges posed by divided loyalties and the potential in many settings for conflicts of interest that need careful management;

• to always act professionally, in accordance with scientific principles and professional standards, including those developed by the International Pharmaceutical Federation.

• to co-operate and collaborate with colleagues, other health professionals, consumers, patients, carers and other actors in the healthcare delivery system to ensure that the best possible quality of healthcare is provided both to individuals and the community at large, while always considering the limitations of available resources and the principles of equity and justice;

• to respect and protect the confidentiality of patient information acquired or accessed in the course of providing professional services and to ensure that such information is only disclosed with the informed consent of that individual or as allowed by applicable legislation and regulation;

• to respect patients’ rights and recognise and respect the cultural differences, beliefs and values of patients, carers and other healthcare professionals, particularly in the event of conflict with their own moral or religious beliefs;

• to ensure continuity of care for the patient in the event of conflict with their own moral or religious beliefs, based on respect for patient autonomy; to comply with legislation and accepted codes and standards of practice in the provision of all professional services and pharmaceutical products and to ensure the integrity of the supply chain for medicines; and

• to ensure that they maintain competence through continuing professional development.

**Ref:** Pharmacist Ethics and Professional Autonomy: Imperatives for Keeping Pharmacy Aligned with the Public Interest. FIP, 2014. Available at: www.fip.org/statement

**University questions**

Explain the moral ethics to be followed by a pharmacist in relation to his job, trade and medical profession. (4+3+3=10) KUHS, July 2010