
BOOK REVIEWS



William N. Tindall, Robert S. Beardsley, and Carole L. Kimberlin. *Communication Skills in Pharmacy Practice: A Practical Guide for Students and Practitioners*, 3rd ed. Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1994. 218 pp., 5 illus., \$29.95 (softcover).

This is the third edition of a communication skills textbook that many pharmacy educators already know well. The book covers issues that are important to practicing pharmacists and pharmacy students alike. The book clearly explains basic concepts in communication theory and describes key components of communication skill in the context of pharmacy practice. The frequent use of realistic examples strengthens the presentation, as does the authors' familiarity with contemporary pharmacy practice. The book should be useful as a text in introductory courses on patient counseling or health communication for pharmacists.

The authors appear to have chosen breadth of coverage over depth in planning the book. The three main parts of the book comprise ten chapters. The chapters are fairly short (17 pages on average) and are not thoroughly referenced (about 7 references and 4 recommended reading per chapter). The result is that many issues are discussed, but few are discussed very deeply. Given the applied nature of the material and the intended audience, this format is probably appropriate.

The book's preface and prologue place the chapters to come in context, emphasizing the societal function served by pharmacists, the shift from a product to a service orientation, the focus on patient outcomes as the ultimate goal of practice, the legal requirements of OBRA '90, and the importance of communication in the medication use process.

Part I of the text attempts to answer the question "What is communica-

tion?" Included in this part are chapters on principles of interpersonal communication, perception and communication, nonverbal communication, and communication barriers. Chapter 1 lays out a standard model of communication, and the components of the model—sender, message, receiver, barriers, and feedback—are briefly defined. The chapter goes on to discuss the context-sensitivity of meaning, the need to bring verbal and nonverbal messages into alignment, and the need for feedback. The authors recommend recording and reviewing one's own performance as a way to increase self-awareness and improve skill. Chapter 2, on nonverbal behavior, describes how body movements and interpersonal distance can either facilitate or hinder effective health communication. The importance of nonverbal sensitivity is noted. Chapter 3 recites an all-too-familiar list of barriers to communication, such as time, privacy, and prejudice, but concrete solutions are left to other chapters or not discussed at all.

Part 2 focuses on "Practical Skills for Pharmacists." The practical skills covered here are listening, empathic responding, and assertiveness. One must possess these skills in order to practice pharmaceutical care, and these two chapters provide an adequate introduction. The chapter on empathy presents a standard Rogerian view of empathic responding. Pharmacists should listen attentively, recognize and reflect feelings in a nonjudgmental way, avoid simple reassurances and advice-giving, and avoid probing and distracting. Assertiveness is discussed in the following chapter, with examples pertaining to patients, physicians, and colleagues. Passivity and aggressiveness are contrasted with assertiveness, and tips are offered for asserting oneself effectively.

Part 3, entitled "Putting It All Together," attempts to synthesize the material from the preceding six chapters and make it relevant to everyday pharmacy practice. It does so by discussing interviewing and assessment, the improvement of patient understanding, tips for dealing with patients in special circumstances, and the ethics of patient care. The interviewing as assessment chapter contains a good conceptual framework for assessment with many practical suggestions, including badly needed advice on appropriate use of the telephone. The chapter on improving understanding contains pointers on making information memorable and comprehensible. Pharmacists should avoid using jargon, use open-ended questions, and verify patient understanding. The information will be familiar to readers who are acquainted with the Indian Health Service's interactive approach to patient counseling, which is surprisingly absent from the chapter's references. Chapter 9, on communicating in special situations, discusses sensory deficits, aphasia, terminally ill patients (including AIDS patients), and psychiatric patients, but the treatment of each is so brief that the effect

is primarily to raise awareness rather than to describe strategies and techniques for dealing with such patients.

Chapter 10 discusses basic ethical principles, describes the development of moral reasoning, and provides a practical framework for ethical decision-making. The chapter is organized around three cases that give the student a chance to apply the ethical principles in question. The lengthy epilogue includes 19 cases for discussion and analysis. Also included are study questions for each chapter and three tables that summarize and provide mnemonics for the hints and strategies described in previous chapters.

The technical production is poor in places, with errors and inconsistencies in the references and inadequate spacing between words on several pages. This, and the relatively superficial treatment of certain topics are the book's only notable shortcomings. The book is required reading in my course on communication with patients, where it works quite well when supplemented with primary source material. Since these skills are only developed with practice, a teacher's manual, with guidelines for designing and evaluating role-playing interactions would make the book even more valuable, especially to instructors whose primary expertise is in pharmacy rather than communication. Still, taken as a whole, the book represents a commendable effort to summarize a vast and disparate body of literature for an audience with pressing practical concerns. If students and practitioners could master the skills and concepts discussed in this book, the goals of pharmaceutical care would be immeasurably advanced.

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Robert A. Buerki and Louis D. Vottero. *Ethical Responsibility in Pharmacy Practice*. Madison, WI: American Institute of the History of Pharmacy, 1994. viii + 194 pp., 6 illus., \$14.00 [\$8.40 AIHP members] (softcover).

One can approach ethics from an atomistic, idealized perspective without regard to the social, political, cultural, and historical context in which human beings actually find themselves. The authors of this helpful, well-written text have chosen an alternate, richer view of ethics and professional pharmacy practice. The authors frame the ethical problems of the present in the historical development of the profession. This is a definite

strength of the book in several ways. First, it places ethics in the center of human interactions and demonstrates how changing expectations, social norms, politics, and education all shape the ethical climate of pharmacy practice. Second, many pharmacy programs lack curriculum content regarding the history of pharmacy, so the book supplies a palatable dose of history while at the same time addressing ethical concerns.

The book begins with an overview of professional values in pharmacy practice. It then proceeds to a sound, but familiar, model for ethical decision-making. Chapter Three focuses on the pharmacist-patient relationship with particular emphasis on the moral basis of the relationship. Communication between the pharmacist and patients, other health professionals, peers, and the general public are discussed in Chapter Four. Communication receives the attention it deserves considering the mediator role of the pharmacy profession. The final chapter examines drug distribution and the problems inherent in the expansion of the drug distribution system. The book also includes a comprehensive list of APhA and related codes of ethics.

The narrative of the book is supplemented with 39 cases. The cases are well-written, accurate, and entertaining. Also, the cases are just long enough to be effective, usually a paragraph in length. This adds to the understanding of the normative content and brings a touch of realism that students would find helpful. Overall, this is a well-written, thoughtful text that would be useful in an ethics or professional development course. It is obvious that the authors have a deep affection for their profession and the good that it can and does bring to society.

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