Pharmacy Week in the Vhembe District
Theme: Use Medicines Safely

Kgodomo Mabilo and Rhulani Maluleke

Background
Pharmacy Week forms part of the national health calendar in South Africa. It is supported by the National Department of Health (NDoH), Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa (PSSA) and the South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC). Each year, NDoH, PSSA and SAPC determine a theme that will address some of the health needs of patients. In 2016, the theme was Use Medicines Safely.

Introduction
This report outlines all activities that happened in Vhembe district during pharmacy week 2016. Vhembe district in Limpopo is the northernmost district of South Africa.

Our objectives for Pharmacy Week 2016
- To educate the public on how to use medicines safely
- To promote and highlight the role of pharmacists in the healthcare system
- To run a health education and awareness campaign to empower communities on taking control and understanding their medicines

Vhembe district comprises of the following hospitals, which to varying degrees, participated in pharmacy week:
- Siloam Hospital
- Donald Fraser Hospital
- Tshilidzini Hospital
- Louis Trichardt Hospital
- Hayani Specialised Hospital
- Malamulele Hospital
- Musina Hospital
- Elim Hospital

Methodology
The district elected a planning committee comprised mostly of pharmacists in community service and pharmacist interns. The team was responsible for planning Pharmacy Week activities in each hospital. Each hospital had a representative from the committee.

Activities were carried out from Monday, 5 September, to Thursday, 9 September in each hospital. A closing function was held at Malamulele hospital on Friday, 9 September 2016.

The purpose of the closing function was to report or give feedback from each hospital on activities that transpired during Pharmacy Week. To show appreciation for our sponsors, Optipharm, Mylan, Sanlam and Liberty were invited to this function to give a talk.

In general, the places visited include secondary schools, clinics, old age homes and special schools. Radio presentations were also made at Makhado FM and Mala FM.

Figure 1: Vhembe District Pharmacy week model
Key:
CSP: Community Service Pharmacist
DP: District Pharmacist
Pharmacy week activities

Each hospital planned and arranged their own activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Siloam hospital</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No activities on this day</td>
<td>Ratshilumela High school</td>
<td>Tshixwadza clinic</td>
<td>Takalani Children’s home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Visited with a team of Allied Health professionals</td>
<td>• Advice and health talk on safe use of medicines</td>
<td>• Children from ages 3 to 20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conducted career guidance and motivational talk</td>
<td>• Education on how to handle medicines</td>
<td>• Talk on how to safely handle medicines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Quizzes and prizes to participating students</td>
<td></td>
<td>• General guidance on youth empowerment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Siloam hospital</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elim hospital</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Launch at OPD</td>
<td>Mashau clinic</td>
<td>Waterval Secondary School</td>
<td>Mabobo village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education and discussion to the hospital community on the theme</td>
<td>• Education on the safe use of medicines</td>
<td>• Education on the use of contraceptives</td>
<td>• Outreach to homes in the village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presentation on eye medication</td>
<td>• Health talk on Hlanganani FM on the safe use of medicines</td>
<td>• Career guidance and motivational talk</td>
<td>Education on the use of medicines given</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Handing out of bags and freebies to participating students</td>
<td>• Expired stock collected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malamulele Hospital</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Launch at Boardroom with management</td>
<td>Shigalo clinic</td>
<td>Humula Secondary school</td>
<td>Malamulele old age home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Health talk to patients on how to use medicines safely</td>
<td>• Health talk on the safe use of medicines to learners</td>
<td>• Health talk to the elderly on how to use medicines safely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Educate patients and encourage them to ask their pharmacist on their medicine therapy</td>
<td>Mala FM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Health talk to the community on the safe use of medicines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Louis Trichardt hospital</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Louis Trichardt clinic</td>
<td>Kutama and Madombizha clinic</td>
<td>Murunwa High school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Placing of pharmacy week posters throughout the hospital</td>
<td>• Education and advice given to patients on the safe use of medicines</td>
<td>• Education of learners on the safe use of medicines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Radio interview on Makhado FM about the safe use of medicines</td>
<td>• Sweets and freebies prepared for use during the week with theme tags attached</td>
<td>• Career guidance and advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• General education on the use of medicines and the profession was touched</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Speaking to learners at Ratshilumela High School

Outreach to Matobo village
Tshilidzini hospital

The Tshilidzini hospital pharmacy staff bought fruits and sweets for the crèche they visited. The name of the crèche is Itshani Tshisaulu. They had educated the people who attended the gathering on how to use medicines safely. There were elderly people who regularly visit the crèche to grow vegetables and engage in extramural activities such as traditional dances.

Closing function

This event was held in the Malamulele hospital dining hall. The hospital management showed great support for this event and both made themselves available and arranged for catering. All pharmacy professionals were invited. The purpose of this event was to give feedback and report on activities that happened in each hospital, through short presentations and illustrations.

Challenges

- Lack of interest or commitment from other pharmacy personnel
- Lack of sponsorships (Pharmacy Week activities require materials to hand out to communities visited, this includes, but is not limited to, food parcels, office stationery, educational materials, transport and t-shirts)
- Poor and untimely planning of activities
- Non-involvement of other health professional when the need arises

Recommendations

- Approach sponsors in time and make necessary arrangements
- Keep consistency in committee members to alleviate confusion and to uphold the standard of planning efficiency
- Establish a solid relationship with private sponsors and give them recognition
- Plan activities in time, preferably three months ahead
- Improve communication channels
- Motivate all staff to be active participants in Pharmacy Week
Acknowledgements

1. We would like to acknowledge our sponsors who gave us materials to facilitate our outreaches and health education throughout the week. These include:
   • Mylan
   • Optipharm
   • Sanlam
   • Liberty
   • Makhado FM
   • Mala FM
2. Manager pharmaceutical services: M Labuschagne
3. Malamulele hospital management
4. Vhembe district pharmacy personnel
5. Pharmacy week technical team (RL Maluleke, T Mabilo, T Pharamela, NT Seboko, NS Lamola, M Mokgotho, AE Masondo, J Mathevula, B Nwandule, R Baloyi, N Makamu, M Ramokone)
6. All the facilities mentioned above for hosting the activities

Conclusion

Pharmacy Week Vhembe district 2016 has been one of the most fulfilling activities in the district. We aim to touch more lives and to reach out more to the community as we did this year. The most important impact any professional can make is not only to practise professionalism, but also to lend a hand in charity to those that need it most.

New dispensing fee published

On 27 January 2017, the Minister of Health published a new dispensing fee for pharmacist, amending Regulation 10 of the Regulations relating to a transparent pricing system for medicines and scheduled substances. The new fee came into immediate effect.

New Regulation 10 – as amended on 27 January 2017

1. The appropriate dispensing fee as contemplated in Section 22G(2)(b) of the Act to be charged by a pharmacist, must be calculated as follows:
   a. where the single exit price of a medicine or scheduled substance is less than ninety seven rand and six cents (R97.06), the dispensing fee shall not exceed R9.25, plus 46 % of the single exit price in respect of that medicine or scheduled substance;
   b. where the single exit price of a medicine or scheduled substance is greater than or equal to ninety seven rand and six cents (R97.06) but less than two hundred and fifty eight rand and eighty eight cents (R258.88), the dispensing fee shall not exceed R22.50 plus 33% of the single exit price in respect of that medicine or scheduled substance;
   c. where the single exit price of a medicine or scheduled substance is greater than or equal to two hundred and fifty eight rand and eighty eight cents (R258.88) but less than nine hundred and six rand and ten cents (R906.10), the dispensing fee shall not exceed R69.00 plus 15% of the Single Exit Price in respect of that medicine or scheduled substance;
   d. where the single exit price of a medicine or scheduled substance is greater than or equal to nine hundred and six rand and ten cents (R906.10), the dispensing fee shall not exceed R160.00 plus 5% of the Single Exit Price in respect of that medicine or scheduled substance.

Dispensing fee poster

PSSA members may download the dispensing fee poster from the PSSA website. Go to the section for members, log in (http://www.pssa.org.za/Member/Logon) and then go to the “my practice” section, where the poster can be downloaded and printed for display in the pharmacy. Members who have forgotten their passwords may go to the recover password page (http://www.pssa.org.za/Member/Password).
Welcoming new members

The Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa (PSSA) welcomes the following pharmacists who joined the Society in November and December 2016. We trust that you will be welcomed into your branches and sectors, and that you will find great value in your membership.


Student members

*We are also delighted to welcome the following student members:*

The plight of young pharmacists

The unavailability of posts for young pharmacy graduates is a source of grave concern, particularly because of the dire need for pharmaceutical services in the country. A new graduate is required by law to fulfil the requirements of both internship and community service. The process of placement of both pharmacist interns and community service pharmacists (CSPs) for 2017 has been fraught with difficulty.

Pharmacist interns

The PSSA is aware that, one month into 2017, there is an unusually high number of pharmacy graduates who have been unable to find a pharmacy in which to complete their internship. While this may be due to reluctance to relocate, there also appears to be a shortage of pharmacists who are able to take on the role of intern tutor. The reasons for this are invariably lack of resources.

Community service for pharmacists

The end of 2016 also saw an unusually high number of pharmacist interns who had not been placed for community service. The unavailability of posts in the public sector led to an unprecedented decision to place community service pharmacists (CSPs) in private sector posts.

In January 2017, the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, held a media briefing where he addressed the situation.

“I can confirm that 795 pharmacists applied for Community Service. Of these, 716 are South Africans and all have been offered positions. However, 3 declined to take them. Seventy nine are foreign nationals. We have identified 108 positions in which all of them can perform their community service,” said Motsoaledi.

“This year, we even created a new stream of Community Service positions in collaboration with the private sector. This is in a programme called the Centralised Chronic Medicine Dispensing and Distribution Programme (CCMDD). In this programme, some selected patients in the public sector do not have to go and queue for their medication at clinics or hospitals, but the medication is delivered to collection points nearer to their homes or place of work. We started this project in 2014 and I am happy to announce that we now have 1 million patients in the public sector who are served by this programme.”

The way forward

It is hoped that in 2017, planning and placement of CSPs will be given priority in order to prevent a recurrence of 2016 situation. The SA Pharmacy Council has been in the process of reviewing the internship experience, and it is hoped that the process has sparked innovative thinking that will make it easier for graduates to find tutors.