SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

PHARMACEUTICAL ETHICS
& PROFESSIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT
FOR PHARMACISTS
AND ASSISTANT PHARMACISTS

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His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said
Blank
The Ministry of Health has keen interest to improve standards and quality of healthcare services provided, raise the awareness of health professionals namely doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other paramedical staff on ethical aspects of medical professions, which is considered as the crucial factor, that strengthens their adherence to the principles of the ideal professional conduct, required for practicing such humanitarian professions.

One of the most important responsibilities of pharmacists and assistant pharmacists is to direct their skills and knowledge towards the best interest of the patient, maintain patient’s safety and improve quality of life of community, by means of devoting themselves to the task of providing utmost professional practice standards in cooperation with the medical team members.

In pursuance of the aforesaid endeavours, issuance of the Pharmaceutical Ethics and Professional Code of Conduct for Pharmacists And Assistant Pharmacists will undoubtedly be a further impetus that improves relations between Pharmacists and their assistants and invigorates their ties with patients and other health professionals. Thus, it is considered as a guide and a reference on the responsibilities and basic duties for Pharmacy Professionals. It also boosts up elements of competency and integrity, ensures patient’s safety, enhances respect of different cultural and social backgrounds and finally, lends a hand to practitioners to gain respect of all.

Dr. Ali Bin Mohammed Bin Moosa, Minister of Health.
Considering the global change in communities’ traditions and attitudes all over, the public are better informed by virtue of communication technology, formal education and consumer awareness. As a result, the people's expectations for the pharmacists' professional role in medical care are rising. To accomplish these expectations, comes the importance of establishing the code of professional conduct by which pharmacy profession may regulate itself and publicly shape the principles by which members of the profession interact, with patients, other health professional and the community. Their professional role in healthcare should be activated to provide high performance, up-to-date knowledge, and continuing competence relevant to their sphere of practice, discharging their responsibilities in relation to maintaining and improving the health and well being of patients and the community. They must foster a caring relationship with the community based on sound ethical values and they should act with honesty and integrity having due regard to standards of behaviour accepted within the profession and reasonably expected by the community and other health professionals that focus on promoting the quality of services provided.

Based on the above-mentioned issues, this code prescribes the ethical responsibilities expected from all practicing pharmacists and assistant pharmacists in the Sultanate of Oman. The code defines the ethical responsibility inherent in the pharmacist’s role and supports the need to protect and promote the interest of patients and their safety, in accordance with Muslim values and health care ethics as well as the rich cultural heritage and blend of Oman community.
I would like to take this opportunity for expressing my appreciation to the members of the Task force who spared their time in making this manual possible. I also extend my thanks to all those who contributed to its preparation.

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PHARMACEUTICAL OATH

I swear by God ... The Great

◆ To regard God, while practicing my profession, and to be loyal to my work.

◆ To protect human life in all stages and under all circumstances, strive to rescue it from death, malady, pain and anxiety.

◆ To keep people’s dignity, and safeguard their confidentialities.

◆ To be, at all time, an instrument of God’s mercy extending my pharmaceutical care to the near and far, virtuous and sinner, friend and enemy.

◆ To strive in pursuit of knowledge and harness it for the benefit, but not the harm of Mankind.

◆ To revere my teacher, teach my junior, and be a colleague to members of medical profession joined in piety and charity.

◆ To safeguard the professional confidentialities, and respect its traditions.

May God be witness to this Oath
GOALS:

This manual intends to:

❖ Acquaint pharmacy professionals with the conduct they are required to adhere to, while practicing and carrying out their duties and responsibilities

❖ Acquaint the community and other professionals with the ethical conduct anticipated to be maintained by pharmacy professionals.

❖ Strengthen the professional conduct of pharmacy practitioners.

❖ Assist in achieving high standards in pharmacy practice in both professional and personal aspects.

(A). PHARMACIST’S PROFESSIONAL ETHICS:

This Manual is based on the following set of fundamental ethical principles, that, guide pharmacists in performing their daily responsibilities:

1) Competency
2) Respect
3) Patients’ safety
4) Integrity
5) Personal behaviour
6) Team work
1. COMPETENCY:

The public have great trust in pharmacists’ knowledge, skills, and professional judgement. This binds the pharmacists to ensure and maintain high standard of competence throughout their career, with a view of providing care and service in a scientific and compassionate manner. It also obliges the pharmacist to have the essential skills required to meet the patients’ needs through fulfilment of the following obligations:

❖ Maintaining and improving his professional competency and have the willingness for lifelong learning through continuing education and communication with colleagues and other medical professionals.

❖ Improving his knowledge by keeping abreast with new medications and state-of-the-art medical technology.

❖ Regular participation in educational and training activities aiming at improving his competence and skills and diffusion of pharmaceutical and health education among patients, their relatives and community.

❖ Providing, when necessary, drug information and relative counselling to end users, on medicines being issued or supervised by him.

❖ Ability to demonstrate profound knowledge on medicines of different therapeutic groups, while providing evidence-based counselling to prescribers, patients, or others.

❖ Improving competence of immediate subordinates, and assumes responsibility for training his new colleagues, pharmacy students, or other students of different medical fields being trained under his supervision.

❖ Having the knowledge of first-aid, especially if he/she works in a hospital or other health institutions.
❖ Being conversant with necessary communication skills that enable him to communicate with patients, their relatives, and other health care-providers.

❖ Use his/her professional knowledge to, prevent use of any medicine that can cause undesirable side effects or expose the patient to risk of adverse drug reaction, especially narcotics and psychotropics, and take all necessary precautions to deal with such cases effectively.

2. RESPECT:

Respect implies appreciation and non-discriminating attitude towards values, rights and needs of the individual himself and the others. It entails understanding and respect for cultural, religious, psychological and lingual context of individuals and communities. It implies maintenance of human rights and assures everybody’s right in having an effective and fair treatment, it also emphasises the importance of showing mutual reverence for other professions involved in health care and the relevant applicable rules.

Respect includes the following and not restricted to:

2-1 Respect for cultural and racial context of the patient, together with the social status and gender

❖ Respect for patients’ cultural and social context, and peculiarity of their lifestyles
❖ Seeking assistance of a competent interpreter if not fully conversant with patient’s language.
❖ Supporting patient’s basic rights and interests through efficient involvement with other medical team members, regardless of patient’s social status or gender.
❖ Respect for the patient’s dignity and privacy.
2-2 Respect for pharmacy profession, fellow professionals, and improving the status of Pharmacy profession.

The pharmacist shall:

❖ Adhere to the laws and regulations applicable to ethical practice of pharmacy in the Sultanate of Oman.

❖ Ensure that the premise where he/she offers his/her services directly to the public reflects the characteristics of the profession.

❖ Respect his colleagues; behave in a pleasant manner and not to discriminate between them based on gender, ethnic, religion or lingual context.

❖ Assumes responsibilities of his/her own professional activities and is accountable for all activities performed under his/her direct supervision.

❖ Shall not undermine the knowledge or skills of a colleague, by direct comments or through unjustified action that leads to uncertainty.

❖ Shall be honest, fair and objective when evaluating performance of subordinates and trainees.

❖ Shall consolidate the reputation of the pharmacy profession at all times, with full adherence to the systems and regulations applicable to ethical practices and accepted by community and other health professionals.

❖ Refrain from any act that may expose reputation of the profession or the employer or MOH to disrepute.

❖ Refrain from any act that may undermine the patient’s confidence in the prescriber.
2-3 Respect for the patient’s right to receive safe & effective medicine:

- Take all necessary measures & precautions while preparing and dispensing medicines.
- Explain to patients in an understandable manner, all required information & instructions, related to medication’s use and storage, and make sure of their comprehension of these information.
- Ensure that all specifications of good storage conditions are maintained at all times.
- Shall exert every endeavour to contact the prescriber for clarification in case of a suspected risk associated with the use of a certain medicine or any uncertainty about the interpretation of a prescription.
- Shall not issue any medicine if there is a doubt as to its quality, safety or effectiveness.
- Shall participate positively in diffusion of pharmaceutical education amongst patients, their families, and other community members.
- Listen to patients carefully, and respect their views and rights.

2-4 Self esteem:

- Build his /her self-confidence in professional practice.
- Have self-respect by respecting others.
- Not to be arrogant because of having all means of power.
- Be capable of making a positive self-change and be able to influence others.
- Shall not be fanatical to his/her self or ideas and accept others ideas and criticisms positively.
- Be quiet and capable of controlling his/her temper.
- Not to be hesitant and always clear any ambiguity.
3. MAINTAIN PATIENTS’ SAFETY:

In order to improve the quality of life of every individual in the community, the utmost attention of the pharmacist should be basically directed towards the benefit and safety of the patients and the community. This includes the following but not restricted to:

◆ The pharmacist must act in all times to gain the patient’s satisfaction and to improve their quality of life.
◆ The pharmacist must not purchase, sell or supply any medicinal product where there is reason to doubt the safety, quality, efficacy or including recalled products or where there is a clear, new evidence that demonstrates or places doubt on previous established product safety.
◆ The Pharmacist shall be responsible for ensuring that the quality and quantity of medicines he/she is supplying is adequate and not excessive, especially for medicines with potential for abuse, dependence or waste due to short shelf life.
◆ The pharmacist shall consult professional colleagues and other health professionals where deemed to be in the best interests of the patient.
◆ The Pharmacist must ensure that necessary care is taken when disposing of waste medical or chemical products.

4. INTEGRITY:

The Pharmacist must be honest and fair, and should put into action the following commitments for setting a distinguished relation with all patients and colleagues:

4-1 Truthfulness, Honesty and Trustworthiness:

❖ Must be truthful, honest and good mannered and shall be fully committed to patient’s interests in order to be worthy of trust being bestowed on him by the community.
Carrying all responsibilities and duties assigned to him/her in a fair and honest manner.

Do not abuse community trust or exploit patients’ lack of knowledge in gaining a personal benefit.

Do not take advantage of his/her privileged position for personal gain.

4-2 Confidentiality and Privacy:

- The pharmacist must respect his patient’s confidentiality and that of their family’s, which could be acquired in the course of the professional practice.
- Confidential information shall only be disclosed by the Pharmacist upon patient’s consent or if requested by the concerned MOH authorities or a court of law or when necessitated by public interest.
- Shall take all necessary precautions to safeguard all confidential information entrusted to him/her. The same is not restricted to data relating to the clinical conditions of the patient; this also includes other data entered in the medical record like; address, telephone numbers.
- Shall take all measures to protect confidentiality of patient’s data in the event that, it is being used for educational and research purposes.

4-3 Adherence to MOH Rules, protocols and guidelines:

- Carry out his/her duties according to assigned clear job description and standard operating procedures for the services being delivered by him/her within the framework of the professional and technical responsibilities.
- Shall carry out all matters pertaining to compounding, dispensing of prescriptions, procurement, storage and distribution of medicines on the basis of current instructions.
❖ Ensure that, dispensing of all medical prescription is always done under his/her direct supervision, and that, the required pharmaceutical interventions have been conducted and relevant advice has been provided.
❖ Shall not change the type or quantity of prescribed medications without approval of the prescriber or the concerned authority.
❖ Shall not dispense or sell, free promotional samples or expired medicines, including medicines expected to expire within the course of treatment.
❖ Keep him/her self updated and to follow the rules, regulations and standard operating procedures approved by the concerned authorities of MOH. Lack of knowledge of the above will not be accepted as an excuse to justify non-adherence to them.
❖ Respond promptly to emergency calls and exert all efforts to make medicines available without interruption.
❖ Notify the immediate supervisor about his/her inability to comply with professional standards in the event that, his/her performance is affected by work conditions.
❖ Shall contribute effectively in promoting rational and effective use of medications and in counselling the patients and should be prudent and careful in the use of available resources.

4-4 Not taking advantages of a privileged position:
❖ Comply with rules and regulations that govern public financial and commercial dealings.
❖ Shall not allow any considerations relating to personal gains to influence his/her professional decisions.
❖ Shall not promote or supply specific medicines with a view of gaining financial remuneration, gifts or other privileges.
❖ Stick to transparency in all financial dealings. In case a clear or potential conflict of interest is found, no decision shall be taken and the financial dealings shall be referred to higher authorities.
Shall not make use of his/her position in making inappropriate relation with patients, their relatives or his subordinates.

4-5 Professional independence

❖ A pharmacist must neither agree to practice under conditions, which compromise his/her professional independence, judgment or integrity, nor impose such conditions on other pharmacists.
❖ The professional independence of pharmacists, working in an environment managed by another pharmacist, must be preserved.
❖ A pharmacist must avoid situations likely to present a conflict of interest or compromise the objectivity of their professional practice.
❖ He/she has the right to reject any request for unauthorized medicines.
❖ He/she has the right to consult the prescriber and intervene on any medicine to ensure safe and effective dispensing.

5. PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR:

5-1 Proper conduct:

The reputation of pharmacy profession obliges every pharmacist to observe proper standards of personal conduct in professional activities and in all situations that may expose him/her to disciplinary proceedings even if the charge is not directly related to pharmacy practice. This includes:

❖ Dishonest behaviour
❖ Violent behaviour.
❖ Use of alcohol or other psychotropics.
❖ Use different types of tobacco products within health institutions premises.
5-2 Opinions about colleagues

❖ Shall not allow his/her views about colleagues’ life style, culture, beliefs, race, religion, colour, and gender or age to prejudice his/her professional relationship with them.
❖ Shall comment carefully on the professional performance of a colleague in case that a mal-practice event is being investigated. In such circumstances honest comment is entirely accepted provided that it is carefully considered and supported with justifications. Such comment shall be sincerely conveyed to the concerned colleague and in a way that enhances the patient and public interests.
❖ Notify the appropriate authority about a colleague whose professional conduct or his practical competence may be called into question or whose professional performance is in some way deficient with logical and scientific based justifications, to ensure that high standards of pharmaceutical practice are maintained.
❖ Respond to every complaint and criticism, positively and constructively.

6. TEAM WORK:

Teamwork plays a vital role for pharmacists in improving the provided health services either with other medical teams or while practicing their own assigned duties and responsibilities.

The merits of Team work also includes:

❖ Create, develop and maintain cooperative relationship with colleagues and other health providers.
❖ Provide a fair and supportive environment that leads to good quality of health services provided.
❖ Respect the skills and contributions of other team members and work in a constructive manner.
❖ Respect the teamwork rights, and should not use their time and effort for personal purposes.
Key Responsibilities of Pharmacists

The Pharmacists understand the nature and the effect of medicines and its ingredients, and how they may be used to prevent or treat illness, relieve symptoms or assist in the diagnosis of disease. The pharmacists in their professional practice use their knowledge for the well-being and safety of patients and the public through their commitment to the following basic responsibilities:

❖ At all times the pharmacist must act in the interests of patients and other members of the public, and seeks to provide the best possible health care for the community in partnership with the medical team. He/she must treat all those who seek their professional services with courtesy, respect and confidentiality and must provide information in a way in which it can be understood.

❖ The Pharmacist must maintain and improve his/her professional competency and skills. He/she must update his/her knowledge in line with latest evidence based information and developments in the field of pharmacy profession.

❖ The Pharmacist must be honest and fair, should behave with integrity and probity, adhere to accepted standards of personal and professional conduct and not to engage in any behaviour or activity likely to bring the profession into disrepute or undermine the public confidence in the profession.

❖ Keep him/herself updated and follow the rules, regulations and standard operating procedures approved by MOH concerned authorities. Lack of knowledge of the above will not be accepted as an excuse to justify non-adherence to them.
(B) ASSISTANT PHARMACIST’S PROFESSIONAL ETHICS:

For the Pharmacists to provide the optimum pharmaceutical services to the patients he/she needs qualified assistant pharmacists, who undertakes work to support, provide or develop these services under pharmacists’ direct supervision and is also responsible for his/her own professional actions.

Basic Ethical Principles For Assistant Pharmacists:

The assistant pharmacist should adopt the same principles and obligations that had been declared for pharmacist during their daily practice, which includes the followings:

- Ensure and maintain the essential competence and skills, with a view to provide services in a scientific and compassionate manner.
- Respect all aspects of professional conduct, cultural and ethnic background of patient, and his right to acquire safe and effective medicines, respects colleagues, demonstrates self-respect to strengthen trust being bestowed on him/her by the community.
- Act at all times in the interests of patients and other members of the public, to maintain patient’s safety and to improve their quality of life.
- He/she must be honest and fair in dealings and take all necessary precaution to safeguard all patients’ confidential information, must not take advantages of his/her profession for personal gain. He/she should also adhere to MOH rules protocols and guidelines and maintain his/her professional independence.
- Observe proper standards relating to personal conduct or when giving opinions on his/her professional colleagues.
- Develop a cooperative relation with colleagues and other health providers and maintain the teamwork spirit.
Key Responsibilities of Assistant Pharmacists

❖ At all times assistant pharmacists must act in the interests of patients and other members of the public, and seek to provide the best possible health care for the community in partnership with other health professionals.

❖ They should provide pharmaceutical services with courtesy, respect and confidentiality.

❖ They must respect patients’ right to participate in decisions about their care and must provide information in an understandable manner.

❖ Adheres to values of transparency and integrity, shall not get involved in any activities or behaviours that disgrace the pharmacy profession or decrease community respect to the profession.

❖ Demonstrates an undiscriminating attitude, respect and appreciation to values, rights and needs of others. Understands and respects religious, cultural, linguistic and psychological backgrounds of individuals and communities.

References

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❖ Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses, Sultanate of Oman – 2005
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