

IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR FUTURE PHARMACISTS

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In today's world, technical skills are no longer enough for pharmaceutical specialists to compete in the highly competitive global work environment. Soft skills are of paramount importance. Things like work ethic, passion, adaptability, leadership, communication skills, professionalism and personality fit are considered as so-called “soft skills”, or “personality skills”. A successful career of pharmaceutical specialist takes more than a degree program or training. Employers are looking at more on workers' soft skills than just their academic abilities. This is exactly why most residency programs and job interviews consist of so many behavioral questions.

The purpose of this work is to define the most important soft skills and describe some ways to get to develop the softer side of future pharmacists.

Empathy, being a key element of emotional intelligence, it is the capacity to understand or feel what other people (patients, pharmacy visitors, clients etc.) are experiencing, that is, the capacity to place oneself in another's position. Empathy goes beyond sympathy, which might be considered “feeling for” someone. Empathy, instead, is “feeling with” that person. Empathy helps pharmacists to connect with patients, show them that they care and communicate more effectively.

Communication today is highly important both in the business world and in private life, that's why pharmacists need communication skills. In the process of professional activity pharmacist should effectively communicate and give information on medicines in a clear and simple manner to a variety of audiences. In turn, listening to patients and other providers is crucial in getting the right information and making decision. As known, employers look for team players, as teams are a basic organizational unit within many companies. Whether pharmacists like it or not, their ability to get along with other people and work as a team is critical. Most pharmacy jobs require them to work as team with pharmacy technicians, nurses, doctors, dieticians and other non-clinical staff.

Work ethic is a set of values based on hard work. There are many components of work ethic, including professionalism, punctuality, employees' overall attitude and behavior. Some businesses define work ethic as the belief in the moral benefit and importance of work and its inherent ability to strengthen character.

Positive attitude is a mental attitude that sees the good and the accomplishments in life, rather than the negative and the failures. It means positive thinking that will make pharmacist the person others want to work with.

Stress management is the attempt to cope with negative effects of stress through the reduction of its response. According to studies, pharmacists are at high risk of burnout if they do not have proper stress-management techniques. Exercises and techniques to manage stress and anxiety build success by goal setting, relaxation and thinking.

Receptive attitude is the ability to accept new ideas or suggestions and consider them. A receptive attitude means pharmacist can handle criticism and enact change when needed. Pharmacist needs to have the ability to accept and learn from criticism.

Time management is vital in any work. Here are some keys on how to improve our time management skills: delegating tasks, prioritizing work, setting up deadlines, avoiding procrastination, starting early, avoiding multitasking by focusing on priorities, all that can help pharmacists to be more successful in their career.

Flexibility is the idea that plans can change very quickly, sometimes with notice and sometimes without. Adaptability is being able to acclimate specialists to changing roles, job responsibilities, material, and schedules. The happiest and the most effective pharmacists are the ones who can roll with the punches and learn to adapt the new environments.

Confidence is the quality of being certain of individual abilities. It is important that pharmacist projects confidence in his work. Confidence is recognized as one of the most influential factors to affect performance. A person can build his confidence by knowing his skills and strengths, creating his career story, developing his mindset, creating a plan, and getting support and encouragement.

Besides defining the most important soft skills, it is important to know how to develop them. The first thing that is important to do is getting to know the person's individual problems and decide what he should improve. After asking these questions, the person should take a step further and ask those he works with, to find out what they think he does well and what he could improve upon.

For instance, if a person needs to work on his written communication skills, then he should start writing, he can write in a journal every day, start a blog, and submit an article to the best pharmacy site on internet.

If there is necessity to improve verbal communications, a person can start talking in front of the mirror; it is the simplest way to practice verbal skills. It is also possible to record a video or audio of communicating or speaking. Hearing himself can give a person an excellent insight in his verbal habit. Beyond those options it is possible to take public speaking courses.

Thus, the world needs smart pharmacists, but it also needs those smart pharmacists to communicate, work as a team, manage time and empathize to provide the best care possible.