



## THE PHARMACEUTIST IN THE ROLL AS EDUCATIONALIST/INFORMANT -PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION OF DRUG-PEDAGOGICS

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### ABSTRACT

This is a description of a 7.5 ECTS credits course in drug-pedagogics suitable for pharmacy students. The aim of this course is to provide the students with skills as informants/communicators concerning drugs and drug use at individual, group and community levels. The course includes advanced studies in drug-pedagogics from psychological, sociological and pharmacological perspective. The examination consists of an individual implementation of oral drug information to a group.

**Keywords:** Drug-pedagogics, Pharmacy-students

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### INTRODUCTION

The daily work of the pharmacist concerns drugs including information about drugs, drug treatment, compliance and concordance. To have knowledge about drugs and pharmacology is necessary but it is also necessary to have the skill to use and mediate this knowledge. In addition to teaching facts about drugs and pharmacology we thought it important to tutoring the students in their role as educationalists/informants. Imitation might be the most common learning process, but learning is not a process that is done to you, not something you just can imitate, but a process you perform. Using computer-guided information systems or patient simulation as teaching aids are becoming more and more common. Teaching the students a picture of our 3D world by expressing it in 2D is a great work of art,<sup>1</sup> probably not obtainable to many teachers. Applying knowledge in communication with real living patients (as opposed to simulated patients) demands the use of your own person in all possible ways e.g. body language, voice, aids and facts, in an adjustment of the message to the listener. It is important to use the thought process combined with the emotional process.

The aim of this course is to provide our pharmacist students with the opportunity to develop their skills as informants/communicators and to integrate the learning of theory with the practical application of facts. This is achieved by complex practical experience of the pedagogical role of the profession, thereby making the students acquire advanced knowledge and skills concerning the communication of drugs and drug use at the individual, group and community levels. Pedagogical skills are taught to contribute to improved compliance/concordance, and to learn about the mechanisms affecting compliance and concordance at the individual, group and community levels, since compliance/concordance is affecting both knowledge and emotion. The students also acquire the skill to conduct motivational interviewing.<sup>2</sup> This course prepares the students for practical application of their knowledge, combining mind and emotion.

### Description of course

Drug-pedagogics is a 7.5 ECTS credits course eligible for third-year students at the Pharmacy Programme at Linköping University in Sweden. The course includes advanced studies in drug pedagogics from a psychological, sociological, communicative as well as a pharmacological perspective. Through their 3 year education in pharmacy the students have been learning, but in their profession as pharmacists they will educate/inform, the opposite of what they have been doing during education; learning versus teaching, education/university versus reality. To present information in a scientific and objective way and to understand the responsibility in their pedagogic profession within the medicinal field is very important for health care personnel and even stated in Swedish health care law. In this course the students learn how to present

information about drugs and drug treatment, and the course is concluded with an examination face to face with a for them unknown group a practical examination in the real world.

Basically the course starts with a general lecture describing pedagogics and presenting various pedagogic models. The next step for the student is to understand the responsibility in their upcoming pedagogic role and to understand the importance and meaning of professionalism. This is achieved with lectures in scientific presentations, how to make a presentation in an objective scientific way, how to use different aids e.g. demonstrations, computers, and how to apply pedagogics within the medical field, and how to use, maybe the most important aid of all, themselves. The students are trained by a speech therapist in presentation techniques; how to in a pedagogic way mediate knowledge and information to various groups using vision, hearing, kinetic, space and body language according to the target group. The hospital priest is leading a discussion about conversational methodology, how to handle difficult facts and how to communicate with very sick and dying patients.

Twice a week during the whole course, the novel Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom<sup>3</sup> is used in tutorial groups, discussing one chapter at a time. This book is a collection of conversations between a young man and his dying teacher, discussing life.

During the course, the sociological, pharmacological and psychological perspectives are intertwined. Consequences of drug use are taken into consideration, i.e. side effects on behaviour, learning and memory, drugs affecting the physiology as well as the psychology of behaviour, learning and memory.

Another topic in this course is social psychology including culture, age, sex and the social body. The understanding/opinion of the body in a community aspect has changed through times and today this represents the social body; connecting the three aspects of the body, the human body (health care, drugs, age), the holy body (religion, culture) and the body in society (aging, genus, culture). The aspects of the social body are lectured and discussed in history, in present time and speculation about the future.

Motivation or emotional intelligence is a key state of mind according to changes of behaviour and the meaning of the concept of motivation, the connection between motivation, neural changes and changes in behavior<sup>4</sup> is lectured. Biological and psychological processes that determine motivation are considered during the course.<sup>5</sup> The students are taught knowledge about and trained in the skill to use motivational interviewing<sup>2</sup> as an instrument in their future role, a patient/customer contact in dialogue instead of monologue. Motivational interviewing is a non-judgmental, non-confrontational and non-adversarial method that recognizes and accepts the fact that to succeed humans have to make changes in

their own way and approach different levels of readiness to change their behaviour e.g. compliance and concordance, smoking cessation and life style changes.

It is important for the students to be aware of the psychological and sociological processes controlling behaviour of individuals, groups and community in the perspective of drugs and diseases. The reactions of individuals, groups and community to changes like getting a disease and to live and/or die with a disease and the importance of health changes to individual, groups and community is taken under consideration. For this part of the course, the film *A Song for Martin*<sup>6</sup> is used as previously described.<sup>7</sup>

The context and meaning of an empathical way of relating to others are discussed. Empathy, in the meaning of putting yourself, your own feelings and attitudes aside, focusing on the other person, trying to understand another person's emotions and feelings.

The examination, at the end of the course, consists of a passed individual implementation of oral drug information to a third party, e.g. an association of old-age pensioners, sport practitioners, pupils, industry employees, policemen, pharmacists. The subject of each lecture is determined in agreement with the course organizer, examiner and the needs of "the audience". Examples of subjects are analgetics, doping, herbal medicinal products, cold, new drugs, drugs for small children. The examination is attended by a tentator who also can intervene in case of need, for instance problems like difficult questions, uncontrolled nervousness etc. The tentator assess the student concerning knowledge, agreement between title and content, objectivity, choice and use of media, if the lecture is adapted to the target group and if the message is reaching the target group. Examination, as an opportunity for learning instead of an interrogation.

#### Evaluation

Nervousness and anxiety are common among the students due to the sense of lack of control and/or fear not to be able to live up to the high set demands. There is of course a risk that the student is discouraged from ever giving a lecture again. However, up till now

all of our students have expressed a will to develop their communication skills, so this examination seems to inspire and highlight possibilities. After the examination the students were very pleased to have succeeded in carrying out the presentation. The greatest challenge according to the students is to identify various ways to explain and clarify the topic, and to raise interest and attention i.e. to reach the audience which is imperative if the message is to reach the audience, and to carry out a lecture to strangers.

After passing this course, students are better prepared for "the real world" i.e. their professional work as pharmacists and drug communicators.

#### Future plans/work/implementation

Both students and teachers find this course excellent in learning the pedagogical/practical skills necessary for working within the pharmacy profession.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To the students, that despite fear, are willing to overcome their limits.

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