

"THE ROLE OF PHARMACISTS IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF VETERINARY DRUGS"

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The pharmacy culture is with the objective of total knowledge of drugs and effects in man and animal with the sole aim of achieving their well being. (1) Emphasis has always been on man and the animal aspect never considered. I am indeed very happy that the Oyo State Branch of the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria has found it worthwhile to turn the search light on the role we should play with respect to veterinary drugs and with particular reference to distribution.

I must say that the pharmacist has a lot of role to play since the focus is drug distribution. It is gladdening to note that presently the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain has introduced a post-registration diploma course in Agricultural and Veterinary Pharmacy. (2) It is now time we consider this in Nigeria.

Since the pharmacist is involved in the production, quality control, marketing, sales and distribution of drugs and medicaments (3) in all the various scopes of the profession - be it in administration, hospital, industry, academics and community practice, our focus on veterinary drugs will broaden the base of our activities.

Our role in supplying information to the physician, educating the nurses (on drug administration to patients) and counselling the patient themselves on the proper use of their drugs (4) now will assume a wider, more complex and more conflicting dimension, thus awakening us to face part of our responsibilities that have almost been forgotten. The battle to shake off the hands of the human doctor stretching too far into our profession will stretch into the territory of the veterinary surgeon and animal health workers.

We have an enormous role to play within the pharmacy health care system as a counsellor, educator and monitor with respect to the safe and effective drug

use. These effort will be extended both to our patients and to fellow health professionals - we as drug consultant to the prescriber - (vet and human doctors) and health consultant to the patient - (owners of pets, livestock farms and farmers). The aspects of concern will include Livestock and Poultry drugs, Vaccines, Feed-Premixes, Additives and Concentrates - and Agrochemicals. Drugs in agriculture and wildlife equally become relevant.

We definitely will need a dose of Animal Health training. This will enable us to know about animals and hence broaden our knowledge in various diseases relevant to veterinary drugs.

Distribution per-se implies "spreading out". (5) Nigeria is essentially a trading economy and distribution of drugs is undertaken by a myriad of different outlets. (3)

We are talking of spreading veterinary drugs from the importer or manufacturer to the ultimate consumer. (9)

For human pharmaceuticals distribution is achieved through the following channels:-

- Registered pharmacies
- Registered patent medicine stores
- Unregistered pharmacies and patent medicine stores
- General retail/outlet stores
- Itinerant street hawker (including buses and trains)
- Market place trader
- Dispensing doctors (clinic)
- Institutional outlets (government hospital)

We will not go into discussing these channels for human drugs but I will borrow the relevant aspects based on my field experience. Basically, there is absolute need to understand what is to be distributed.

As a pharmacist in, say community practise, and desiring to stock up vet drugs, the drug literature/brochure will

supply information on active ingredient, indications, dosage, contra- indications etc and with the sound pharmacy training background, the pharmacological activities will be readily comprehensible.

However, there are some other factors to consider if we are to perform creditably well as vet pharmacists. A foundation in vet physiology, pathology, feeds and feeding, nutrition, microbiology, animal management and parasitology (7) is essential to be able to communicate soundly.

The distribution outlets include:

- I. Institutional outlets.
 - (1) Government
 - A Federal
 - B State
 - C Local
 - (2) Teaching Hospitals.
- II. Dispensing Vet Doctors/Clinics.
- III. General Retail/Wholesale Outlets
- IV. Farms

GOVERNMENT:

Tenders/L.P.O's are issued at the various government levels. The directorate of veterinary services of the Ministry of Agriculture at both Federal and State Levels are responsible for stocking up and distribution to their various vet clinics and sub-clinics.

Some local government councils are involved in livestock farming and require drugs and vaccines from time to time. Teaching hospitals exist in Universities where vet medicine is offered and are not only involved in teaching and research but also with drug prescription and treatment.

DISPENSING VET DOCTORS/CLINICS:

Various vet clinics abound and are involved in disease diagnosis, treatment, prescription and dispensing. Such clinics

market drugs either as retail or wholesale and are owned/manned by qualified vets.

Currently there are about 1500 vets in Nigeria. (7)

GENERAL OUTLETS:

These are agroservice centres dealing with sales of vet drugs, equipments, medicaments livestock feed, feed additives, premixes, concentrates and agrochemicals. They are privately owned and mostly by non-vets who have training in animal health.

FARMS:

Livestock farms require services of vets and most farms retain them either on part-time or full time basis. Drugs, vaccines, feed and equipments are basically the inputs of livestock farming.

Well established farms import most of their drugs and vaccines. It is rather unfortunate that over 60% of vet drugs including Chloramphenicol and Trypanocides are sold directly to the consumers without prescription (8) and this practice should be checked.

OPPORTUNITY:

There are a lot of opportunities open to the pharmacist in the distributive aspect. In terms of business, we stand to gain financially. Discount regimen on vet drugs vary from company to company. Since most of the known pharmaceutical companies also have animal health/vet divisions, their vet drugs could be ordered alongside human drugs.

Since we are moving into a new area, a lot will be learnt as to what product and of which company could be moved faster.

Existing premises could carve out a small section within the pharmacy and with proper display of products and posters, open an outlet for vet drugs. It

might take some time to reach a pinnacle but the long-term gains lurk by the corner.

So many non-professionals are involved in veterinary drugs and vaccine importation and with our being involved, we will assume our authority as the professional who should be responsible for drug distribution.

The introduction of vet pharmacy practice will bring into open the need for a rational drug use in animals and by and large might involve the drafting of essential vet drug list. A lot of havoc has been caused by unscrupulous drug importation and improper handling of vaccines.

The community has confidence in the pharmacist as a drug counsellor and our role will further be extended to the animal world.

We are adequately trained to be able to face the challenge of this novel role.

CONSTRAINTS:

Primary among the various constraints is finance.

Expansion into vet drug business will involve capital investment and our financial institutions may not readily come to aid and when they do, the interest accrueable could mop the returns on investments.

There will be need to undergo introductory training in animal health so as to be in the position to create articulate rapport within the vet profession.

This will involve time and money. In the interim/short term, an animal health graduate could be employed to take charge of the technical aspects and also as a vet/animal health salesman.

Our delving into vet pharmacy and drug distribution will give the vets some sleeplessness. There will be a need to

disseminate enough information to the health team about our assumption of our legitimate professional responsibility as the drug expert.

Habenda ration valentudinis: It is our duty to care for health. (12)

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