

Patient counselling is the process of providing medication information **orally or in written form** to patients or their representatives regarding:

- Direction of use
- Possible side effects and precautions
- Storage conditions
- Diet and lifestyle modifications

Goal: To help the patient use medicines **safely and effectively** for the best therapeutic outcome.

Objectives of Patient Counselling

1. To help the patient **understand the importance** of medications in maintaining their health.
2. To establish a **working relationship** and a foundation for continuous pharmacist–patient interaction.
3. To improve patient **understanding of strategies** to handle side effects and drug interactions.
4. To ensure **better patient compliance/adherence**.
5. To make the patient an **informed, responsible, and active participant** in their treatment and self-care.
6. To enhance the **professional image of the pharmacist** as a provider of pharmaceutical care.
7. To help **prevent ADRs and drug interactions** through education.

Counselling Communication Skills

1. Verbal Communication

- Language (simple and clear)
- Tone (calm and polite)
- Volume (audible but not loud)
- Rate of speech (slow enough for understanding)

2. Non-Verbal Communication

- Body language and posture
- Eye contact (shows attentiveness)
- Facial expressions
- Movements and gestures
- Appropriate proximity (comfortable distance)

Qualities of a Good Counsellor

A pharmacist should:

- Be a **good listener**
- Be **empathetic** and understanding
- Be **non-judgmental** and **tolerant**
- Be **flexible** in approach
- Communicate **clearly and confidently**

Content of Counselling

Pharmacist should cover the following points while counselling a patient:

Aspect	Example / Description
Purpose of medication	What the drug treats
Mechanism / How it works	Simple explanation
Dose and duration	How much, how often, and for how long
Goals of therapy	Expected outcomes (e.g., symptom relief, BP control)
Possible adverse effects	How to recognize and manage them
Drug or food interactions	What to avoid
Storage instructions	Room temperature, refrigerator, away from light
Expected benefit time	When patient may notice improvement
Missed dose advice	What to do if a dose is forgotten
Special monitoring	E.g., blood tests, sugar check

Steps in Patient Counselling Process

Preparing for the Session

- Gather as much information as possible about the **patient and therapy**.
- Review **prescription**, previous dispensing records, and medical history.
- If unfamiliar with a drug, consult **drug information references**.
- Consider the patient's **mental and physical condition** before starting.

Opening the Session

- Greet the patient politely and **introduce yourself**:
"Hello Mr. Rao, my name is Dr. Shanti, and I am your clinical pharmacist. I would like to discuss your medications for a few minutes."
- Address patients by **name and title** (Mr., Mrs., Miss).
- Establish a **friendly and respectful atmosphere**.
- Gather relevant information about:
 - Current disease and medication
 - Allergies

- Past medical and drug history
- Personal habits (diet, smoking, alcohol use)

Use **open-ended questions**, e.g.:

- “What did your doctor tell you about your illness?”
- “Can you describe how you take your medicine at home?”
- “What do you know about this medication?”

Avoid embarrassing or judgmental questions.

Counselling Content (Main Discussion)

Explain:

- Name and strength of medicine
- Why it is prescribed and how it works
- How and when to take the medicine
- Duration of therapy and expected results
- Common and serious side effects and how to manage them
- Drug-food or drug-drug interactions
- Dietary advice or lifestyle changes (exercise, smoking cessation, etc.)
- Storage and handling instructions
- What to do in case of **missed dose**
- Any **monitoring tests** needed (e.g., blood sugar, BP, INR, etc.)

Closing the Session

- Check the patient's **understanding** using feedback questions such as:
 - “Can you tell me what this medicine is for?”
 - “How long should you take this medicine?”
 - “What will you do if you forget a dose?”
- Encourage the patient to **ask doubts or clarifications**.
- Summarize the main points clearly and in logical order.
- Thank the patient for their time and reinforce your availability for future help.

Benefits of Effective Counselling

To the Patient	To the Pharmacist / Hospital
Better understanding of therapy	Improved patient trust
Improved adherence & outcomes	Enhanced professional image
Reduced ADRs & interactions	Reduced medication errors
Empowered in self-care	Contribution to quality healthcare

Summary Table

Step	Key Focus	Example
Preparation	Gather info about patient & medicine	Review prescription
Opening	Build rapport	Introduce, greet, ask open questions
Counselling	Explain therapy details	Dose, side effects, diet
Closing	Verify understanding	Ask feedback, summarize

Conclusion

Patient counselling is an integral part of **pharmaceutical care**.

A well-informed and confident patient:

- Adheres better to therapy
- Experiences fewer complications
- Achieves better therapeutic outcomes

Pharmacists thus play a crucial role as **educators, communicators, and healthcare partners** in promoting safe and effective drug therapy.

