



EDITORIAL

Education and practice of pharmacy in Libya

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In Libya, pharmacy education and practice are similar to medical education and practice. Both sectors of public and private pharmacy education and pharmacy practice have been significantly unchanged for more than forty years. It is a traditional pharmacy style of education and practice with a limited change of education and practice. Now, there are more than ten public pharmacy colleges and more than five private colleges established in Libya for a population of seven million. In addition, there are several intermediate pharmacy institutes that provide a middle degree in pharmacy practice with a minimal knowledge in pharmaceutical sciences and training. The practice of pharmacy in Libya is still a classical mode with only dispensing medicines directly in almost a nonprofessional way and an old fashion way. However, the situation is old and complicated and needs a great deal of attention from different health policymakers and authorities such as the Ministry of High Education and Ministry of Health, the National Pharmaceutical Union and the Libyan Association for Pharmacists. Historically, before 1980, all pharmacists and pharmacy technicians graduated from abroad mainly from Egypt, Italy, Greece and England. Pharmacists in the public sector (Ministry of Health MoH, hospitals and clinics) and private sector (National Pharmaceutical Company, NPC, Pharmacy stores) were mostly non-Libyan. Few were Libyan pharmacists who worked in administration places such as MoH and NPC. First University College was established in the middle of the 1970s in Tripoli based on five academic years schedule of teaching (1+4) with a capacity of students' entry (50 students) selected from different regions of Libya. Great support by the Ministry of Education was given to the college to educate and qualify the student to be a pharmacist with international education and practice standards. In 1980, the first graduated Libyan pharmacists (n=32, 16F and 16M) were trained (courses in Libya, England and Sweden) to be professional in pharmacy practice, drug quality control and the pharmaceutical industry. Programs of syllabus and staff members were of international supported by professional examiners to keep a high standard output. The teaching core was based on based on internationally cooperation of highly standard visitors from known universities. This was supported by building facilities of high standard college constructed in the middle of the 1980s. It is the most beautiful building in the world with standards and an international style for teaching and research facilities. Others were established in Benghazi (the 1990s), Zawia and Misrata (2000s) of same teaching style but with a limited facility. In other Libyan geographical cities (Ghomes, Derna, Tubraq, Zelitina, Gharian & Subrata) colleges were established recently but with low facilities and messy plan. Teaching and training in Pharmacy College aimed to award a Bachelor's degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences based on requests such as university, basic sciences and college requirements of specialized courses. The graduated student has pharmaceutical sciences which makes him/her work as a pharmacist in clinical sectors



or in other sectors of quality control, industry or research. The pharmaceutical courses are pharmacology and toxicology, pharmaceuticals, pharmaceutical industry, medicinal chemistry and pharmacognosy. 165 credit hours of teaching and training are needed for a degree. So far, almost 5000 students have passed from the University of Tripoli only, with 100 staff-teaching members involved in teaching and training. Instead, postgraduate pharmaceutical studies leading to a Master Degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences were started in 1999 in pharmacology with a year's program. Pharmacognosy, microbiology, pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical chemistry have also been involved in postgraduate programs. The total number of students granted a high Degree was 100 till now in Pharmacology, Pharmacognosy and Pharmaceuticals. The degree was based on two stages of two years (specific and advanced courses and research part). Recently, other professional degrees in clinical pharmacy practice have also been started in Libya by different authorities such as LIMU, Postgraduate Academy, Libyan Medical Board and Arab Board to train the pharmacist as a professional in clinical pharmacy practice and hospital pharmacy, some leading to Pharm D. However, these programs are still ongoing and are new with providing specific training courses for specialty (pharmacist specialist) to service the patient and community as a new pharmacist role in Libyan community and health services [1, 2]. A clear national strategy for continuous pharmacy education (CED) of pharmacists by health authorities to improve practice in private or public sectors is absent. However, the role and job of pharmacists in the Libyan healthcare system is old. So far, no authority has asked or wanted to be responsible for CED. A limited number of individual short courses, workshops, meetings and conferences on pharmaceutical sciences and practice are randomly run by Union, Associations and sometimes with medical universities. These activities are not well-organized and aimed but they provide a positive social and scientific environment for pharmacists to interact and discuss professional pharmaceutical problems in Libya. Most of these activities are generally concentrated on the practice and education of pharmacists in the community. It consists of lectures that are usually given by senior pharmacists and university staff to improve drug services for patients and the community as well as to develop the role of pharmacist in national health care. Indeed, one established program of CPE is the Annual Libyan Pharmacy forum which held in April by the Libyan Union in April. This forum usually consists of plenary lectures, workshops for practice, industry and quality of university pharmacy education. As it is known everywhere, there is should be a national condition for CPE for registered pharmacists. For example, a national pharmacy board should be implanted in Libya to take responsibility in CPE [1, 2]. I think now with new clinical pharmacy practice (extended roles and expanded competencies), it is the right time to implant such a national strategy in Libya.

Conflict of interest: The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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