

Concordance: A Partnership in Medicine-Taking

Bond C, editor. Pharmaceutical Press, London, 2004. Hard cover, 165 pages. ISBN 0853695725. \$54.95.

Concordance: A Partnership in Medicine-Taking is a well-referenced, commentary-style text on patient counselling theory, a topic that is at the forefront of health care today. The book presents several authors' definitions of concordance and combines their various perspectives to create a broad overview encompassing information on a variety of topics that will maintain readers' interest. Studies and statistics on patient counselling are also presented to support these perspectives. The book's authors are not idealistic, and they recognize the obstacles that practitioners face in implementing an approach of this nature. The examples of concordance presented here are based on interactions among physicians, nurses, and pharmacists, and although the book is not written specifically for pharmacists, it could prove ideal for pharmacists interested in developing better counselling skills.

This publication explores many of the questions that practitioners will ask: How will evidence-based medicine be promoted to patients who are convinced that another, less proven treatment would be ideal for them? How much evidence is there that one approach will be more successful than another, in terms of patient outcomes? Does concordance counselling require more time than "usual care"? If physicians begin to practise concordance, will nurses and pharmacists also adopt it as best practice? Are some patients not suited to concordance? If so, would paternalistic counselling styles be more desirable for them? *Concordance* addresses these issues in detail and provides helpful answers to many of these questions.

All of the models of concordance presented in the book have a common thread: the attempt to achieve agreement on a treatment plan that will be viewed favourably from the

patient's perspective. Attaining this favourable perspective can be a challenge for the physician, as he or she is in effect sharing the decision-making process for the treatment plan, but this balance between patient and health care provider may offer a solution to the many episodes of treatment failure that are due to noncompliance.

The editor briefly mentions the changing roles of nurses and pharmacists, whereby these practitioners are being granted limited prescribing authority in various practice settings, and many readers will appreciate her view of this change. Thus, the examples of physician prescribing provided in the book are also relevant to pharmacists functioning in the role of counsellors. In particular, the need to understand a patient's belief systems becomes more pressing in this new counselling concept. The patient population is changing as well, and patients are now targeted by drug companies as consumers of medication. Drug advertisements deliver "sound bites" of drug and disease knowledge. Prescriptions may be requested by patients to a greater extent than has previously been the case. As well, some patients may further develop their knowledge by consulting credible references and may be experts on their own disease by the time they visit a health care provider.

Concordance in essence represents a broadened approach to understanding and respecting the patient's belief systems. This book may very well offer a great perspective on the future of medication therapy.

Brad Pascal Blanchard, BSc(Pharm)
Pharmacist Consultant
Department of National Defence
Ottawa, Ontario