Assessment to advice: Preparing future pharmacists for safe and effective self-care recommendations

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BACKGROUND

- The Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) reports that over 81% of U.S. adults use over-the-counter (OTC) medicines as an initial treatment for common ailments.[1]
- The convenience of OTC availability can lead to misuse or inappropriate selection, potentially resulting in adverse health outcomes.[2]
- In many community pharmacy OTC consultations, the focus is on product label details and recommendations, with only a small fraction of patients receiving a full assessment of symptoms, current medications, and appropriateness of self-care.[3]
- Misuse of OTC drugs such as excessive dosing, duplicate ingredients, or inappropriate adult formulations in pediatrics can occur when patients self-select and self-manage.[4]
- Older adults are at higher risk, with 79% showing at least one misuse type.[4]
- A novel didactic PharmD course integrating the SCHOLAR-MAC framework with the Pharmacists' Patient Care Process (PPCP), was implemented to teach first-year pharmacy students a systematic approach to patient assessment prior to recommending OTC therapies.
- The PPCP (collect → assess → plan → implement → follow-up) guides student pharmacists to deliver patient-centered care while SCHOLAR-MAC allows them to gather pertinent details on patient's symptoms and medical history which improves OTC medication counseling.

OBJECTIVE

- To evaluate the effectiveness of a novel didactic course integrating the SHOLAR-MAC framework and the PPCP process in preparing first-year student pharmacists for OTC patient counseling, as measured by mean overall course grades and course pass rates across three academic years.

METHODS

- A structured 3-credit didactic course (2023-2025) for first-year PharmD students
- Integrated SCHOLAR-MAC framework within the PPCP Process
- Instruction included case-based learning, patient counseling practice, and evidence-based OTC recommendations
- Students' performance assessed using overall course grades based on students' exam and quiz scores
- Pass rates tracked across three academic years

A structured, integrated teaching framework improves student pharmacists' knowledge and skills to deliver safe and effective self-care recommendations.

Key Findings

Strong overall course performance (~84% mean grade)

High pass rates (≥ 94.5%) across all cohorts

Integration of SCHOLAR-MAC and PPCP improved self-care clinical reasoning

Figure 1. Pharmacists' Patient Care Process[5]

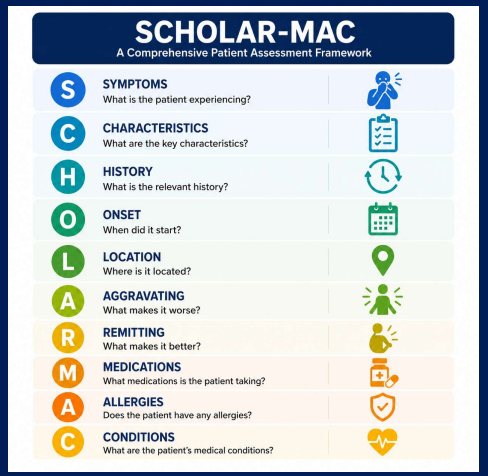
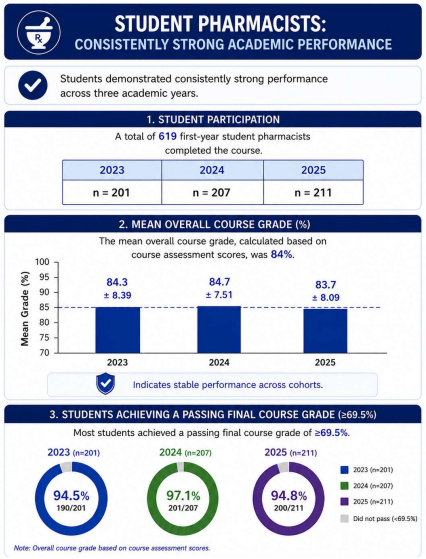


Figure 2. SCHOLAR-MAC patient assessment framework
Created by the author with assistance from ChatGPT(OpenAI).

RESULTS



CONCLUSION

- Integration of the SCHOLAR-MAC and PPCP within a required first-year self-care course effectively supported development of student pharmacists' patient assessment, clinical reasoning, and evidence-based OTC recommendation skills.
- This model offers a replicable framework for incorporating systematic patient assessment and therapeutic decision-making into early pharmacy curricula and experiential education.

REFERENCES

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