

KERALA

Medication safety yet to get its due in State



World Patient Safety Day

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Errors are rarely reported

A prescription protocol and a prescription audit should be brought about to bring down medication errors. These errors are hardly getting reported, says O.C. Naveen Chand, president of the [Kerala](#) State Pharmacy Council.

The State council has proposed a counselling counter on medication for patients under the Health Department's Aardram scheme. It would be the first step in checking medication errors, says Mr. Chand.

As part of the first World Patient Safety Day being observed on Tuesday (September 17), the World Health Organization has called for focus on medication safety, among others.



Kerala accounts for about a tenth of the ₹20,000-crore drug market in the country. As the number of patients a doctor has to examine is rather huge, the best practice would be to

have a clinical pharmacist who can help doctors dispense the right medicine in the right dosage, says Mr. Chand.

A medicine book

Ideally, a record book should be kept about the medicines that a person is prescribed in a hospital or a single-doctor clinic.

The medicine book would provide doctors an insight into a person's medication over six months to a year. Dispensing of medicine is as important as diagnosis of disease, says Mr. Chand.

He says a comprehensive drug policy is required, encompassing the role of clinical pharmacists, which would ensure the right dosage according to the weight of the person, prevent duplication of medicines and errors in prescription.

There is a big knowledge gap with regard to medicines among the common people.

A visit to the doctor only provides the patient medicines, not knowledge of what the medicine does to the body.

Correct knowledge

The effect of the medicine if taken with hot water or cold water, whether tea and coffee make a difference to the intake of medicines, or whether there could be reactions to any drink or food with the medicines are rarely conveyed to a patient. Such awareness is important, says Mr. Chand.

Ravi Menon, State Drugs Controller, says the first step towards medication safety could be a prescription of the drug's generic name and legible writing.

The pharmacists also need to be constantly updated about the new drugs in the market.

Ideally, the clinical pharmacist should brief the patient on the methods to elicit the best results from the drug since the doctor would not have enough time, says Mr. Menon.

Colour-coded medicines

In a hospital setting, besides prescription audit, it is important that the patient identification is done properly, and that LASA (look alike, sound alike) medicines are listed and colour-coded, says K.V. Beena, additional medical superintendent of the Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences.

Clinical pharmacist at Aster Medcity Nabil Skaria says that while private hospitals have taken small steps towards reducing medication errors, the government is yet to act step in this regard.

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