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Pneumonia vaccination in diabetes care

IN fighting burdensome diseases, it is crucial to ensure that Filipino patients get quality and accessible healthcare. Collaborative interventions are needed to address priority healthcare areas, such as diabetes management and immunization.

In celebration of World Health Organization's World Immunization Week, the country's leading pharmacy chain, Mercury Drug Corporation, partnered with the Philippine Society of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism (PSEDM), the Philippine Pharmacists Association (PPhA), and global healthcare company MSD in the Philippines to facilitate a series of diabetes care and immunization lectures at selected Get Well at Mercury Drug – Diabetes Care specialty corners. The lectures highlighted the importance of vaccination for persons living with diabetes.

“Mercury Drug's foremost priority is the health of Filipinos and knowing that diabetes is the 6th leading cause of death in the country, we partnered with PPhA, PSEDM and MSD for the Get Well at Mercury Drug Diabetes Care program, which was launched in August 2018. Our vision is to improve diabetes care for Filipino patients through an inter-professional collaborative approach,” said Annie Tejada, Mercury Drug district manager.

Vaccination is crucial in diabetes management, given that it is harder for the immune system of patients with diabetes to fight infections.

Fighting pneumonia can be burdensome, costly, and critical. According to Dr. Aurora Macaballug, board member of PSEDM, the cost of vaccination is minimal compared to pneumonia medication and hospitalization which can escalate to up to PhP250,000 per patient.

“If a person aged 50 and above has never received any pneumonia vaccine, it's time to get vaccinated. If a patient has a risk factor like diabetes and heart disease, even if the patient is not yet 50 years old, immunization is needed,” said Dr. Joel Santiaguero, pulmonologist at the Philippine General Hospital.

Medication adherence, or the taking of medications correctly as prescribed by the doctor, is another integral aspect of diabetes care and management that many patients usually take for granted.

Miriam Soriano, aged 71 and diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, tells of a common occurrence among diabetic patients given that they have to take several types of medicines per day. “My daughter in-law takes all her medicines in one go so she will not forget it.”

The PPhA asserts the important role of pharmacists in guiding diabetes patients. “Pharmacists not only help ensure that patients have the right knowledge about drugs, but they also guide them in preventing possible complications that can arise from drug interactions or non-adherence.

Pharmacists can also check for complications, administer screening tests, and make referrals to other members of the diabetes care team,” explained Dr. Yolanda Robles, president of PPhA.

“In the future, pharmacists would actually be able to administer adult vaccines under The New Pharmacy Law. In the meantime, we're calling on the pharmacists to also educate patients about vaccination,” she said.

Mercury Drug, in partnership with PPhA, are working together to empower and equip pharmacists with the knowledge and skills to provide better counseling and support to patients.