

New Paradigms in Healthcare

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In the first two decades of this new millennium, the self-sufficiency of Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) have begun to be questioned. The narrative version gradually assumed increasing importance as the need emerged to shift to more biologically, psychologically, socially, and existentially focused models. The terrible experience of the COVID pandemic truly revealed that EBM alone, while being a wonderful scientific philosophy and containing the physician's paternalistic approach, has its limitations: it often ignores both the patient's and physician's perspectives as persons, as human beings; it pays relentless attention to biological markers and not to the more personal, psychological, social, and anthropological ones, removing the emotions, thoughts, and desires of life, focusing on just the "measurable quality" of it.

Health Humanities, Medical Humanities and Narrative Medicine are arts intertwined with sciences that allow to broaden the mindset and approach of healthcare professionals, helping them to produce better care and more well-being.

Aim of this series is to collect "person-centered" contributions, as only a multidisciplinary and collaborative team can meet the challenge of combining the multiple aspects of human health, as well as the health of our planet, and of all the creatures that live on it, in a common effort to stop or reverse the enormous damage committed by humans during our anthropocentric era: a new paradigm of healthcare, education and learning to create a sustainable health system.

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The Relationship between Pharmacists and Patients

Care and Complexity

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Foreword

The realization of this monograph is driven by a deep conviction: The pharmaceutical profession, far from being a static and purely technical practice, is undergoing a profound transformation, positioning itself at the intersection of scientific rigor, technological innovation, and the complexity of care. The creation of this text, in fact, as is evident from its internal structure, is guided by the desire to move beyond the image of the pharmacist as a mere dispenser of medicines, and to rediscover their more complete identity as a caregiver and a relational mediator in support of social cohesion and health equity.

The exploration proposed by the work begins with a historical perspective that serves as an essential return to the origins (Chap. 1). The discussion of the evolution of the pharmacist's role, from the Egyptians and Greeks (Hippocrates) up to Roman influence (Galen) and the Salerno School, does not merely have an academic value, but constitutes the necessary anchor for appreciating the scientific solidity of the discipline. This historical analysis, as the reader will discover, will help them understand and define the boundaries of medical and pharmaceutical science and appreciate how the present is the product of a millennial tradition of research and practice.

Continuing this exploration, the author highlights that the proposed idea of care is fueled and supported by values such as listening, dialogue, and empathy (Chap. 2), which give the professional the ability to intervene in unexpected situations. It is in this dimension, which involves not only the body but also the deep meanings of the illness experience, that I believe the pharmacist finds their deepest *raison d'être*; the reflection on the right to care meets the right to illness and dignity, reminding us that assistance is not only a medical matter but an ethical imperative of respect, listening, and nondiscrimination.

But there is more that can serve the reader of this work, and which emerges clearly as we delve into its pages. The sense of care discussed cannot ignore the systemic realities that shape or limit this concept. Understanding the profound structural inequalities that generate the “poverty of care,” often deny equitable access to healthcare and amplify social and economic disparities (Chap. 3),

implicitly strengthens the idea that the pharmacist is a relational mediator whose task is twofold: to combat stereotypes and prejudices and act concretely for the promotion of health equity.

If this is the case, the care of others then appears inseparable from self-care (Chap. 4), and to provide empathetic and sustainable assistance, the pharmacist must, in turn, be a subject who is cared for. Autobiographical writing, psychosocial development, well-being linked to beauty, and, above all, burn-out among healthcare workers have become an opportunity to reaffirm this principle and remind us that *cura sui* (care of self) is an ethical as much as transformative practice.

These considerations find a crucial testing ground in the central part of this work through the exploration of a specific Italian case study (Chap. 5), which allows the reader (especially those at the beginning of their professional career) to connect the text to a formative dimension of “learning by doing.” The example of rural pharmacies, essential for territorial cohesion, the impact of educational reforms, and the direct testimonies of psychologists and pharmacists that are reported, as well as the application of the narrative medicine approach to the pharmacist profession, confirm that the transformation is already underway and see this professional as an essential relational mediator.

Following this perspective, the chapter concerning the medical humanities (Chap. 6) is not to be considered an appendix, but represents a strong theoretical framework (which the author of the work decided to reveal, preserving the anticipation, almost at the end of the text) that holds together what the reader has learned and discussed up to that point. The integration of evidence-based medicine with narrative-based approaches allows one to overcome the limits of the biomedical model, placing the patient’s lived experience at the center of the therapeutic path. The conviction that narrative can become a tool for healing and identity reconstruction, thus, provides further scope for intervention for the ethics of care that has been discussed and consistently supports the epistemological challenge posed by this approach.

Having reached the end of the text, the reader is implicitly confronted with a question that perhaps they have preserved throughout the reading of the work: What can be the future of this professional today (Chap. 7), who is asked to be the “custodian of care” but also, simultaneously, to rely on digital technologies and AI? The challenge of the future, for which the work intelligently reserves space for analysis, proposes a balanced approach where technology is a *complement* and not a *substitute* for human care. This is why the pharmacist again assumes the figure of a complex professional: One who embraces digital literacy and AI, but does so with an ethical compass firmly oriented toward professional responsibility and patient trust.

Ultimately, this monograph appears to me as an important invitation to view the pharmacist not only as a technician expert in medicines but as a custodian of care in a complex perspective: A figure who combines the scientific competence inherited from a millennial history with the emotional and narrative intelligence required by

our present and future. It is in this dynamic synthesis—between pharmacy as an exact science and pharmacy as a relational art—that the profession can fully fulfill its vital role. A role that is more crucial than ever in a society marked by profound contradictions, ideological polarizations, and a growing tendency toward the trivialization of thought and action.

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Contents

1	The Role of the Pharmacist: A Historical Perspective on the Birth and Evolution of the Pharmacist	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	At the Dawn of Human Civilization: The Practice of Healing Emerges from the Ice	2
1.3	The Golden Bough	2
1.4	The History of Human Beings	3
1.5	The Egyptians	4
1.6	The Chinese	4
1.7	The Incas, Sumerians and Indians	5
1.8	The Greeks	6
1.9	Hippocrates	8
1.10	The Romans: Dioscorides and Galen	9
1.11	The Birth of the Pharmacy as a Physical Place	10
1.12	The Monks and the Islamic Golden Age	11
1.13	The School of Salerno	13
1.14	Frederick II and the First Pharmacy in Europe	13
1.14.1	Pharmacy After Its Official Creation and Today	16
1.14.2	The Visit to the Noble College of Pharmaceutical and Chemical Sciences of Rome	17
1.14.3	Practice Time	19
	References	19
2	Care and Communication	21
2.1	Introduction	21
2.2	The Concept of Care Through Different Perspectives	23
2.3	Listen to the Patient: The Role of Empathy	26
2.4	Assertive, Passive and Aggressive Communication	32
2.5	Communication with an Inclusive Gender Perspective	34
2.6	Creativity, Divergent Thinking and Problem-Solving Applied to the Pharmacy Context	36

2.7	Bystander Effect and Social Influence: The Otherness	39
2.8	Practice Time	41
	References.	41
3	Pharmacy in Intercultural Contexts and in Educational and Cultural Inequalities	43
3.1	Introduction	43
3.2	Illiteracy, Socio-economic Hardship, Refugees and Migrants: Stereotypes and Prejudice.	44
3.3	Disability: The Biopsychosocial Perspective.	47
3.4	The Zone of Proximal Development	48
3.5	The Pygmalion Effect	50
3.6	Practice Time	51
	References.	52
4	Self-Care	53
4.1	Introduction	53
4.2	An Interdisciplinary Theory of Self-Care	54
4.2.1	The Myth of Cronos and the Care of the Self	55
4.2.2	On the Distinction Between Caring About and Caring For	56
4.2.3	Living, Feeling and the Art of Self-Understanding Through Autobiography.	56
4.3	The Ages of Life: From Early Childhood to Adulthood	58
4.4	Aesthetics and Cosmetics: Beauty Will Save the World	60
4.5	Psychotropic Drugs, Illegal Drugs and Drug Addiction	62
4.6	Pharmacist's Burnout.	64
4.7	Practice Time	64
	References.	65
5	The Italian Case Study	67
5.1	Introduction	67
5.2	Pharmacies in Rural Places	68
5.3	Reform of the Pharmacy Degree Course	70
5.4	Interviews with Experts: Interviews with a Psychologist in an Oncology Department in a Hospital; Daniela Scala and Titti Faggiano from SIFO	71
5.4.1	Interview with a Psychologist Working in an Oncology Department.	71
5.4.2	Interviews with Daniela Scala and Titti Faggiano from SIFO	73
5.5	Focus Group with Students of the First Course "The Complexity of the Pharmacist-Patient Relationship: Towards a Pedagogy of Care"	78
5.6	Practice Time	82
	References.	82

6	Medical Humanities	85
6.1	Introduction	85
6.2	Medical Humanities, Narrative Medicine and Narrative Pharmacy	86
6.2.1	Narrative Medicine	87
6.2.2	Narrative Pharmacy	89
6.3	The Ethical Dimension of Care After the COVID-19 Pandemic . . .	92
6.4	Oriental Medicine, Homeopathy, Naturopathy and Phytotherapy	94
6.5	Practice Time	96
	References	97
7	The Future of Pharmacists	99
7.1	Introduction	99
7.2	Pharmacy and Artificial Intelligence: Online Pharmacies	100
7.3	Digital Transformation in Pharmacy and Medicine: Online Pharmacies and Artificial Intelligence	101
7.4	How the Future of Pharmacists and Patients Will Change with Artificial Intelligence	103
7.5	Identity and Training for Online Life in Future Pharmacists	104
7.6	Can We All Do Better?	106
7.7	Practice Time	110
	References	110