

Medication Safety project Mongolia

As a spin-off from the contacts made by Farmacie Mondiaal Foundation (FM) in the beginning of 2016 an initial Medication Safety training project was realised.

From September 19th to the 24th 2016 I, Raymond Brunink, travelled to Mongolia on a voluntary basis with financial support of FM to help the Mongolian pharmacists setting up a structured approach to improving medication safety. Two times a 12h course was presented to totally about 35 pharmacists at the National University premises in Ulaanbataar and with their co-operation.

In the Netherlands I am working as interim pharmacist for ApotheekVrij where I am co-owner. For my business I've been posted on a wide range of assignments, including in the Dutch community pharmacy. We also have a lot of experience with providing training to pharmacy assistants. The request to help the Mongolian pharmacist, the self-development of the training and the provision of this training, felt like a logical result of my work in the Netherlands.

Upon my arrival in Ulaanbaatar, I was warmly welcomed by our colleagues from the Association of Mongolian Pharmacy Professionals (AMPP). Among the Mongolian colleagues there was one who had completed her education at a university in the USA. She acted as interpreter during my stay. This was essential because most Mongolians only speak Russian in addition to Mongolian. They've shown me the city and I also got acquainted with the authentic Mongolian culture and cuisine. I'd never eaten Mongolian food before. I greatly enjoyed this experience. The contrast between the noise and bustle of the city on the one hand and the vastness and tranquillity of the countryside on the other hand is almost surreal. I have often had the idea I sat in a program on National Geographic Channel. In short, Mongolia is a wonderful country and well worth the effort to spend a holiday.

For me this was the first time I would give a training abroad supported by FM. The preparation I found quite challenging and time-consuming. I've written a personal training from scratch based on the learning objectives received by e-mail exchange with Mrs. Zuzaan Zulaga (President of the AMPP).

It turned out to be very difficult to get clear what exactly was needed and how I could connect to what they already had. They were very much looking for a good reference work on interactions and how to deal with them appropriately and consistently. Unfortunately, I couldn't refer them directly to the resources that we use in the Netherlands, because they are all written in Dutch. But, without this information a proper medication safety program cannot be organized by my idea. With permission of the Royal Dutch Pharmacist's Association (KNMP) I was able to translate 18 frequently existing interactions and contra-indications occurring in the Netherlands from our KNMP database into English.

So far the Mongolian pharmacists only had the information from the SmPC's and PubMed at their disposal. They also ran into the problem that it is very time-consuming to collect this information. Even if you possess all available data, they have discovered that it is almost impossible to interpret this data correctly on your own. During a plenary session, I showed them why they have great difficulty in the practice of monitoring interactions. How this is due to the information available to them and how we deal with it (with the aid of advanced IT-tools) in the Netherlands.

Using an interactive quiz about our model drug miconazole oral gel it has become very clear that the SmPC does not reflect the Dutch recommendations. After a brief discussion of the

backgrounds and motivations of the Dutch recommendations it was soon an unanimous opinion that the Dutch recommendations were more useful for Mongolian pharmacy practice than the SmPC's. Then they gained some practical experience with the translated interactions in a workshop by preparing 18 cases. They presented these to each other.

This approach proved to be a great success. They are therefore very motivated to further explore the possibilities to implement a Dutch-like system (with national recommendations, guidelines and IT-tools) in Mongolia.

During the last part of the training we have discussed SMART objectives and the Deming circle. While preparing, the fact had emerged that the implementation of plans is often a problem. In their university education there is hardly any attention for management skills. While practicing with SMART goals another big issue came to light. Pharmacists in Mongolia speak little to no English. As a result, the understanding of the international literature, is very troublesome for them. My presence has therefore also rekindled the long-cherished wish to learn better English.

An interesting coincidence was that during my stay it happened to be 'National Pharmacist Day'. I was invited to be present at an official meeting at the Ministry of Health and could officially hand over a hard copy of the book 'Practical Pharmaceutics' to the AMPP, being a gift from FM to the AMPP.

A first step has been made in the structural approach of interactions. For the future an expansion of the number of interactions, whether or not supported with software, would be a nice sequel. For this purpose additional funding is necessary. In addition, a replay of the current course for pharmacists who couldn't be present now could be very useful to achieve greater support within the profession.

Personally, I learned a lot from their enthusiasm and work ethic. Compared to the Dutch pharmacies they still have a long way to go. At the same time they have managed to overcome major obstacles in a short period of time. They see the problems that lie ahead, therefore, especially as challenges to face. I can look back with pleasure on my trip to Mongolia.

Concerning a follow up; the project will be evaluated by the AMPP and FM and henceforth new activities/projects could be realised.

Lastly I would like to thank the following persons for the perfect practical organisation and pleasant personal stay:

- Mrs. Zuzaan, for the warm welcome and social evenings.
- Mrs. Narangerel for translating and showing me the city.
- Dr. Davaadagva and the School of Pharmacy for providing an appropriate training facility.
- Mr. Ulambayar, Mr. Sodnompil, Mrs. Bayarzul and Mr. Rentsendorj for taken me on a wonderful trip to the countryside.
- The members of the Association of Mongolian Pharmacy Professionals for organizing a great farewell evening. With special thanks to Mrs. Munkhnasan and Mrs. Bayarmaa for their perseverance into the early morning.

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