

ABSTRACT

Successful communication with patients in a multicultural, multilingual environment is a challenge to health professionals, particularly in the context of HIV/Aids and antiretroviral (ARV) treatment. Although the introduction of ARVs has brought hope, high levels of adherence are required to ensure treatment success and numerous barriers to adherence exist. Pharmacists play an important role in encouraging adherence to ARV treatment regimens by providing education and counselling. However, previous research indicates that interactions are often dominated by the pharmacist. Also, verification of patients' understanding of information is infrequent and that patients are often passive recipients of instructions. This study aims to identify and describe interactive processes in pharmacy interactions while considering the impact of the disease and macro context on communication.

Twenty-six cross-cultural, cross-linguistic pharmacist-patient interactions from a South African HIV/Aids pharmacy are described. Data collection included video recordings, interviews with participants and ethnographic observations in the pharmacy. A hybrid analytical approach incorporated aspects of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Discourse Analysis (DA).

The results of this study are particularly encouraging. They demonstrate that despite the presence of cultural, linguistic and other contextual barriers, pharmacist-patient interactions can be efficient. The use of facilitative verbal and non-verbal communication strategies ensures that dosage instructions are successfully communicated by the pharmacist to the patient. In line with prior research, collaboration is promoted when pharmacists create rapport and focus on the lifeworld of the patient. The study shows that intuition and sensitivity to atmosphere in interactions is essential for achieving concordance.

The disease context of HIV/Aids has a profound influence on the pharmacist-patient interaction and this study demonstrates the significant impact of the macro

context on micro aspects of communication. The evidence suggests that the nature of humanity and the daily interface between culture and language in South Africa enables pharmacists and patients to transcend some of the barriers to communication and collaboration that have been identified in previous studies. The findings imply that the diversity of South Africa provides both hope and a resource which can inform policy and future practice.

Keywords: pharmacist, patient, interaction, institutional talk, HIV/Aids, antiretroviral, South Africa, cross-cultural, Conversation Analysis, Discourse Analysis