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[1 comment](#) ^[1]

The Value of New Knowledge and Skills for Afghanistan's Pharmacists

[Management Sciences for Health](#) ^[2]

[Fragile States](#) ^[3]



The Ministry of Public Health's (MOPH) Pharmaceutical Enterprises operates 53 pharmacy stores located near government hospitals nationwide, managed by 118 pharmacists. With 1 million US dollars in capital, pharmaceuticals are purchased, stored, and then distributed to the Afghan people through these government-owned pharmacies.

Dr. Mirza Mohammed Ayoobi, the Deputy Director of Pharmaceutical Enterprises says, "Majority of our government-employed pharmacists have over 15 years of experience, but have not kept pace with the changing landscape of pharmacy practice. They need training on medication counseling, rational use, and good dispensing practices."

In response, the Strengthening Pharmaceutical Systems Program-Afghanistan team organized and facilitated the first of a series of training programs to upgrade the pharmacist's knowledge and skills on dispensing and rational use of medicines.

After a training program, MSH interviewed Mr. Mohammad Hasham, a pharmacist in Khairkhana, about the importance and value of this training course.



Can you please introduce yourself?

My name is Mohammad Hasham. I graduated from the Faculty of Pharmacy of Kabul University in 1381 (Year 2002). Since then, I have worked in different departments of the MOPH. Most recently, I have worked in the MOPH's Pharmaceutical Enterprises, branch number 40, located in Khairkhana, a 102-bed Hospital.

How many training courses have you participated in? What issues were discussed in these courses?

Unfortunately, I have not participated in any other training course. This is the first time I am attending such an important training course.

How do you feel about your first-ever training course?

I am very happy. It is worth-mentioning that for a very long time after my graduation, I stopped studying and learning about new topics. This is not the case only for me: all the people you see here are the same. We have turned into "shopkeepers," as they say. All of us were very eager to see such a positive change in our lives. Fortunately, the SPS Program has facilitated this opportunity and has drawn our attention to learn new things and raise our professional levels.



What are some of the most important lessons you and your colleagues learned in this training course?

We realized that as responsible pharmacists we must pay more attention to our daily practice and improve our professionalism. We recognized the threat of antimicrobial resistance and learned how as pharmacists, we can contribute to reduce the risk. We were shocked to learn from the MOPH and SPS that a survey has shown that irrational use of medicines is rampant, particularly of antibiotics in our country.

Having attended this course, I realized that we are also to blame in this respect. Dispensing medications is an essential part of treating patients. If a patient is not made to understand properly how to use medicines, this in itself leads the patients to not use medicines, especially antibiotics at the correct times and duration. It is our duty during the dispensing process, to educate our patients about the rational use of drugs, so that we ensure that our patients understand how to use them properly.

The first round of the training course on appropriate methods of dispensing medicines to patients was conducted from April 11-13, 2011. Thirty two pharmacists participated in the first of a series of training courses.

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This report was written and compiled by Zahir Siddiqui and Lutfullah Ehaas.

Afghanistan [6], medicines [7], pharmaceutical management [8], pharmacists [9], SPS [10], training [11]

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Links:

- [1] <http://www.msh.org/blog/2011/06/14/the-value-of-new-knowledge-and-skills-for-afghanistan%E2%80%99s-pharmacists#comments>
- [2] <http://www.msh.org/users/management-sciences-for-health>
- [3] <http://www.msh.org/blog-categories/fragile-states>
- [4] <http://www.msh.org/projects/sps/Index2.cfm>
- [5] <http://www.usaid.gov/>
- [6] <http://www.msh.org/blog-tags/afghanistan>
- [7] <http://www.msh.org/blog-tags/medicines>
- [8] <http://www.msh.org/blog-tags/pharmaceutical-management>
- [9] <http://www.msh.org/blog-tags/pharmacists>
- [10] <http://www.msh.org/blog-tags/sps>
- [11] <http://www.msh.org/blog-tags/training>