Lesson 2 - Communication and Customer Service
Assignments Answer Key

Assignment 1 Case Study
Review the Case Study on page 55 of the Pharmacy Technician Practice and Procedures textbook. Then answer the following questions.

1. What forms of communication were used during this incident?
   **Answer:** Robert is using both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication at the pharmacy.

2. What did his nonverbal actions demonstrate?
   **Answer:** His skin color may depict that he is not feeling well. The patient was clutching his chest possibly indicating that he may be experiencing either an angina or possibly heart attack. The slurred speech may indicate the patient may have suffered a stroke.

Assignment 2 At Your Service
Review the At Your Service scenario on page 56 of the Pharmacy Technician Practice and Procedures textbook. Then answer the following question.

1. What are examples of good customer service exemplified by Brandon?
   **Answer:** Examples of good customer service in the study:
   - Answering the telephone promptly.
   - The pharmacy technician identifying the pharmacy and himself.
   - Addressing the caller as Ms. Ellen.
   - Informs patient when the prescription will be ready for pick-up.
   - Obtaining correct contact information from the patient.
   - Contacting the patient when the prescription is ready for pick-up.

Assignment 3 Critical Thinking
Answer each question after thinking carefully about your responses.

1. A managed-care patient has brought a prescription into the pharmacy to be filled. The pharmacy technician is attempting to adjudicate the claim. The claim is rejected by the third-party provider with the following explanation— INVALID CARDHOLDER. How would you handle the situation?
   **Answer:** Ask the patient if all of the information you have is correct. If it is correct, ask if they may have a new prescription card. If they do not, offer to call the “Help Desk” of the third party provider.

2. A patient drops off a prescription to be filled early in the morning and informs you that he or she will pick it up at the end of the day. When you go to fill the prescription, you realize that you are temporarily out of the medication. You order the medication for the patient and it will be delivered by the wholesaler the next day. The patient returns at the end of the day to find out that the prescription has not been filled and that he or she was not
notified of the problem during the day, even though you had a contact telephone number. What would you do?

**Answer:** Apologize to the patient regarding the situation and offer to locate the medication for the patient at the nearest pharmacy of his/her choice.

3. A new patient brings a prescription to be filled at your pharmacy. When you attempt to collect information from the patient, you realize that she does not speak English. How would you collect information for the patient profile?

**Answer:** Ask if someone else in the pharmacy or who works in the store speaks the individual’s language.

4. A patient returns to the pharmacy in the morning with a filled prescription from the previous evening. The patient informs you that he or she received the wrong medication. How would you handle the situation?

**Answer:** Apologize to the customer and inform the pharmacist of the situation immediately.

5. A patient brings in a new prescription to be filled and you know that you do not carry that particular medication. What options would you give the patient regarding filling the prescription?

**Answer:** Offer to order the medication to be delivered for the next business day or contact another pharmacy of their choosing, whether it is a member of the same chain or a competitor.

6. It is Monday afternoon and the pharmacy is extremely busy. The pharmacy is giving a wait time of 90-minutes. Patients are impatiently standing around the pharmacy counter. A patient approaches your pharmacy counter with an ice pack to his left jaw and appears to be in pain. He hands you his Percocet prescription and informs you that he has left his dentist’s office after having all of his wisdom teeth removed an hour ago. You inform him of the long wait. He asks if it can be done any faster. What do you do?

**Answer:** Inform the pharmacist of the situation and see if there is any possibility the prescription can be filled quicker.

7. A woman who is a very good customer enters the pharmacy to have a prescription filled. She does not appear to be her normal jovial self and you ask if there is something wrong. She replies that her husband died a week ago. How would you handle the situation?

**Answer:** Demonstrate sympathy and listen attentively to her.

8. A very good patient brings in some prescriptions to be filled. Upon receiving and looking at the prescriptions, you realize that the individual has been diagnosed with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). What do you say to the patient?

**Answer:** Say nothing, and be extremely careful with your body language; your body language can have a greater impact than words.

9. Identify stressors in your life and discuss how you reduce this stress.

**Possible answer:** Family and work contribute to stress in our lives and these stressors can be reduced through maintaining healthy habits.
10. Which communication skill is the most important in providing excellent customer service? Why?
   Possible answer: Listening carefully to the customer will help you solve the customer’s problem.

11. Which communication barrier do you find poses the greatest number of problems in providing customer service?
   Possible answer: Language

12. As a pharmacy technician, what area of communication do you need to work on the most to provide excellent customer service? Why?
   Possible answer: Listening carefully to the customer and not interrupting them as they are speaking.

13. How does maintaining a positive attitude improve customer service?
   Answer: Positive people attract positive people and bring out the best in people.

14. A profession is defined as an occupation that shares 10 common characteristics. Explain how each of these characteristics relates to being a pharmacy technician.
   Answer: Refer to page 66 in text for the ten characteristics. Student may have different interpretations of these 10 characteristics.

Assignment 4 HIPAA Scenario
Two pharmacy technicians and a pharmacy clerk were overheard discussing a coworker’s medical condition in the break room. One of the pharmacy technicians, Michael, filled a prescription for Carol, the coworker, for prenatal vitamins and assumed that Carol was pregnant. He then proceeded to discuss the issue with his friends at work. When Carol, who was not pregnant, entered the break room and realized she was the topic of discussion, she immediately went to find her supervisor. Returning to the break room with the supervisor, she confronted the gossiping trio. The supervisor asked the technicians and the clerk to wait in his office. He then called the hospital’s privacy officer to inquire about actions he could take to reprimand his staff.

Discussion Questions
1. Did the gossiping pharmacy technicians break a law or were they merely guilty of unprofessional behavior? Answer: They broke the HIPAA privacy law.

2. What actions might a supervisor take in such a situation?
   Answer: The Pharmacy Supervisor may choose to counsel and retrain his gossiping staff on the penalties for breaking HIPAA law or he may attempt to impose some type of financial penalties. Financial penalties for improper disclosure of PHI (personal health information) range from mild civil penalties that begin at $100 per incident to harsh criminal penalties that have large fines and prison time. The penalties are stiffer depending upon whether the offense is one of wrongful disclosure, one where information was gained under false pretenses, or whether or not the offense was committed with intent to sell PHI. The staff should be taught the importance of safeguarding a patient’s PHI and made to realize the
potential harm and damage that could result to the patient in the event of improper
disclosure.

Assignment 5 Internet Activities
Visit the Web site of your state board of pharmacy and review the cases where complaints have
been filed against either a pharmacist or pharmacy technician.

1. How many of these cases could have been prevented if better communication skills had
   been applied?
   **Answers will vary.** Reviewing these cases can help demonstrate the role communication
   skills play in customer complaint prevention.

2. What would you have done to prevent these complaints from being filed?
   **Answers will vary.** Conjuring up ways you may have prevented these complaints can arm
   you with effective approaches to prevent similar incidences in the future.

Assignment 6 Apply Your Knowledge

1. Ms. Dowd brings in her prescription bottle for a refill of Fosamax on a Saturday afternoon.
   There are no refills remaining on the prescription. Despite numerous attempts to contact
   her physician, the pharmacy was unable to do so.
   a. What is the problem?
      **Answer:** There are no remaining refills on the prescription and the pharmacy is unable to
      contact the physician for permission to refill the prescription.

   b. What are possible solutions to this problem?
      **Answer:** Ask the patient if she is completely out of her medication. If she is completely out
      of the medication, ask the pharmacist if you can provide the patient with enough of the
      medication to last her until you can obtain permission from the physician on Monday.

2. Mr. Kunze calls the pharmacy on Monday to refill a prescription. He informs the pharmacy
   technician that no refills remain on the prescription and that his physician is expecting a
   call from the pharmacy to approve the refill. Mr. Kunze provides the pharmacy technician
   with both his home, office, and cell telephone numbers. He informs the pharmacy
   technician that he will pick up the prescription after 4 P.M. on Wednesday. Wednesday
   afternoon at 5:15 P.M., Mr. Kunze arrives at the pharmacy to pick up the prescription. The
   pharmacy technician searches for the prescription for 5 minutes and finally informs Mr.
   Kunze that they have not been able to obtain permission to refill his prescription for
   Lipitor. Mr. Kunze becomes extremely upset.
   a. Does Mr. Kunze have a reason to be upset with the pharmacy? Why or why not?

   **Answer:** Yes. Mr. Kunze provided the pharmacy with all of the necessary prescription and
   personal information to refill the prescription.
b. What could the pharmacy have done to prevent this incident from occurring?

**Answer:** A member of the pharmacy staff should have notified Mr. Kunze as soon as possible that they were experiencing problems obtaining refill permission from his physician. The pharmacy should have made multiple attempts to contact Mr. Kunze’s physician.

c. How would you handle the situation?

**Possible answer:** Apologize to the patient. Call the physician’s office immediately for refill authorization. If one is unable to obtain refill authorization, ask the pharmacist if you may provide the patient with enough medication until the patient can return to pick up the medication.

d. Evaluate how the pharmacy technician handled the situation.

**Possible answer:** The problem could have been avoided if someone from the pharmacy had been persistent in contacting the physician’s office and notifying the patient of any problems they encountered.

3. It is Monday morning and Mr. Dagit presents a new prescription for hypertension to the pharmacy. The pharmacy technician examines the prescription and asks the pharmacist if they stock this medication. The pharmacist informs the technician they do not have the medication in stock.

a. What are some possible solutions to this problem?

**Answer:** The pharmacy technician could offer to order the medication for the patient to be delivered on its next scheduled delivery from a wholesaler or they could attempt to locate the medication at another pharmacy for the patient.

b. What would you say to Mr. Dagit?

**Possible answer:** Explain politely to Mr. Dagit the situation and the possible alternatives and ask him how he would like to proceed.

c. Evaluate how the pharmacy technician handled the situation.
Answer: The technician handled the situation properly by promptly asking the pharmacist the in-stock status of the medication.

4. How does the appearance of the pharmacy affect the communication process between the pharmacy team and the customer? Use examples in your discussion.

Answer: A clean, neat, organized and well lit pharmacy will convey to the customer the attention to detail the pharmacy staff demonstrates. However, a dirty, sloppy and poorly lit for pharmacy may suggest to the customer the opposite impression.

5. Ms. Vargas brings in a new prescription to be filled at your pharmacy. Her new prescription does not have her address, birth date, or home telephone listed on it. You attempt to obtain this information from the patient and realize that she does not understand or speak English. You enter her name in the pharmacy computer to determine if she has ever filled a prescription at your pharmacy. After several attempts, you conclude that she has never filled a prescription at your pharmacy. How would you collect the necessary information?

Answer: If someone accompanied Ms. Vargas to the pharmacy, the technician could ask her friend for the necessary information. Another possibility would be if someone in the pharmacy spoke the same language as Ms. Vargas.

6. Which type of barrier—environmental, personal, patient, or time—provides the greatest obstacle to the pharmacy customer? Give examples with your explanation.

Answer: Answers will vary based upon the student’s personal experiences. Pharmacy customers may have a variety of communication barriers. Understanding these barriers can help you view situations from a customer’s perspective.

7. Identify the five most important work habits of a pharmacy technician. Why did you select them?

Answers will vary. Exploring the reasons why certain work habits are crucial for a pharmacy technician can inspire you to reflect those habits in your work routine.

8. Is a pharmacy technician a professional? Why or why not?
**Answer:** Pharmacy technicians are considered paraprofessionals because their primary responsibility is to assist the pharmacist.

9. Mary Locke has been a patient of your pharmacy for several years. Recently, she has been extremely angry and irritable when she has visited the pharmacy. Today, you notice that her hair appears to be thinning and she has lost weight. She informs you she has been diagnosed with both ovarian and uterine cancer. She is undergoing chemotherapy. How do you react? What do you say to her?

**Answer:** Listen carefully and demonstrate empathy toward the patient.

**Assignment 7 Practice Your Knowledge**

**Goal**
To observe and interpret the body language of the pharmacy staff.

**Assignment**
Visit your local pharmacy and observe the body language of both the pharmacist and the pharmacy technician. In the following table, list examples of body language demonstrated by the pharmacy team.

**Answers will vary.** Actively observing the body language of others can help you appreciate the role body language has in communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe the clothing the pharmacist was wearing.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe the clothing the pharmacy technician was wearing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were the pharmacy staff members wearing name tags?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did they acknowledge you when you approached the pharmacy counter? How long did it take them to acknowledge you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did they smile at you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe their facial expressions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did they look you in the eye?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Were they standing up straight or were they slouching?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe their hand motions.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If you asked them a question, did they move toward you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the appearance of the pharmacy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How would you describe their attitude toward their customers? Why?

Did the phone ring while you were standing there? If so, how many times did it ring before it was answered?

Did their body language create a positive or negative impression? Why?

Assignment 8 Pharm Facts

Use an online reference such as www.rxlist.com or www.drugs.com to complete the following table.

As a pharmacy technician it is important to be aware of the adverse effects of medications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Name</th>
<th>Generic Name</th>
<th>Indications</th>
<th>Contraindication</th>
<th>Adverse Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anusol HC Suppositories</td>
<td>hydrocortisone</td>
<td>hemorrhoids</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bactrim Pediatric Suspension</td>
<td>sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim</td>
<td>infections (ear and urinary tract)</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cortisporin TC Otic Suspension</td>
<td>colistin sulfate/neomycin sulfate/thonzonium bromide/hydrocortisone acetate</td>
<td>ear infections</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domeboro Tablets</td>
<td>aluminum acetate</td>
<td>topical astringent</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES Chewable Tablets</td>
<td>erythromycin</td>
<td>bacterial infections</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epi-Pen</td>
<td>epinephrine</td>
<td>anaphylactic reactions</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epsom Salts</td>
<td>magnesium sulfate</td>
<td>topical soaks and laxative</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleet Enema</td>
<td>sodium biphosphate and sodium phosphate</td>
<td>laxative</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flonase</td>
<td>fluticasone</td>
<td>respiratory allergy</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Generic Name</th>
<th>Indications</th>
<th>Contraindication</th>
<th>Adverse Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humulin 70/30 Insulin</td>
<td>human insulin isophane suspension and human insulin injection</td>
<td>insulin dependent diabetes mellitus</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keflex Capsules</td>
<td>cephalexin</td>
<td>bacterial infections</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotrimin Cream</td>
<td>clotrimazole</td>
<td>fungal infections</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metamucil</td>
<td>psyllium</td>
<td>laxative</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monistat 7 Vaginal Cream</td>
<td>miconazole</td>
<td>fungal infections</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mycelex Troche</td>
<td>clotrimazole</td>
<td>fungal infections</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitrostat</td>
<td>nitroglycerin</td>
<td>Angina</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nizoral Shampoo</td>
<td>ketoconazole</td>
<td>topical fungal infections</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Nasal Spray</td>
<td>normal saline solution</td>
<td>nasal decongesant</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Joseph’s Chewable Aspirin</td>
<td>acetylsalicylic acid</td>
<td>analgesic, antipyretic and anti-inflammatory</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessalon Perles</td>
<td>benzonatate</td>
<td>cough suppressant</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timoptic Ophthalmic Drops</td>
<td>timolol</td>
<td>glaucoma</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tylenol Pediatric Drops</td>
<td>acetaminophen</td>
<td>analgesic and antipyretic</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zovirax Ointment</td>
<td>acyclovir</td>
<td>viral infections</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>