

Vocabulary Chart

Title of article: Pharmacists: Providing Valuable Services

Directions: Your teacher will write a word list on the board for you to copy into the box at the bottom of the page. After you copy the words into the box, write them in the column that best describes what you know about each one. Be prepared to share the meanings of the words you know.

Don't know at all	Have seen or heard – don't know meaning	I think I know the meaning	I know a meaning

Word List

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Pre-reading Questions: Do you know what a pharmacist does? Have you ever spoken to a pharmacist about a health issue or a medication?

Pharmacists: Providing Valuable Services

Today's pharmacists do much more than fill the approximately 1.6 billion prescriptions doctors write every year. They provide a valuable service to the people who come to their counters to get a prescription filled or to ask questions. A recent Gallup poll showed that Americans judged pharmacists to be the nation's most trustworthy professionals. For the third year in a row, they came in ahead of the clergy, lawyers, dentists—even doctors.

Why such a strong vote of confidence? “We're accessible,” says Roberta Armstrong, a pharmacist in Albion, Michigan. “A lot of us work ten-to-twelve-hour days. You don't have to wait an hour before we'll talk to you. How many doctors can you say that about?”

“We provide high-quality health information at no cost,” says Gary Holt, a professor of pharmacology at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. “And you can talk to a pharmacist any time the pharmacy's open, with no appointment or receptionist.”

If the role of the pharmacist has changed, so has the world of drugs. Today's physician works with approximately 400,000 prescription drugs. Whether you go to a small neighborhood pharmacy or a chain like Walgreens, pharmacists deal with a lot of substances and information.

“Consumers trust us,” says Armstrong, “but too many of them still don't know how to take advantage of what we offer.”

One of the most important services a pharmacist can provide is to maintain your full drug profile—a record of all your past prescriptions, along with information on any relevant health conditions you might have. Such a profile is not a family medical history, but a list of allergies, infections, and disorders that could be affected by the drugs you take.

Most states require pharmacists to keep such profiles and to give you advice whenever you get a new prescription. And even in states where the profiles aren't required by law, many pharmacies maintain them anyway. Even more importantly, says Armstrong, drug profiles can help pharmacists catch mistakes. Prescribing errors do happen. Often the mistakes are serious, and sometimes these mistakes can kill you.

“When something raises a question in my mind, I discuss the patient's needs with the doctor,” Armstrong says. “It's possible for a doctor not to know what drugs a patient may be taking from another doctor. I can help because I've got the information right in my computer.”

Armstrong recalls one incident in which a patient came into her pharmacy with a prescription for an ulcer medication. “I knew that he was already on an anticoagulant from the same doctor—a potentially dangerous combination because the two drugs together can cause serious bleeding,” she recalls. “I got in touch with the doctor and got the prescription changed.”

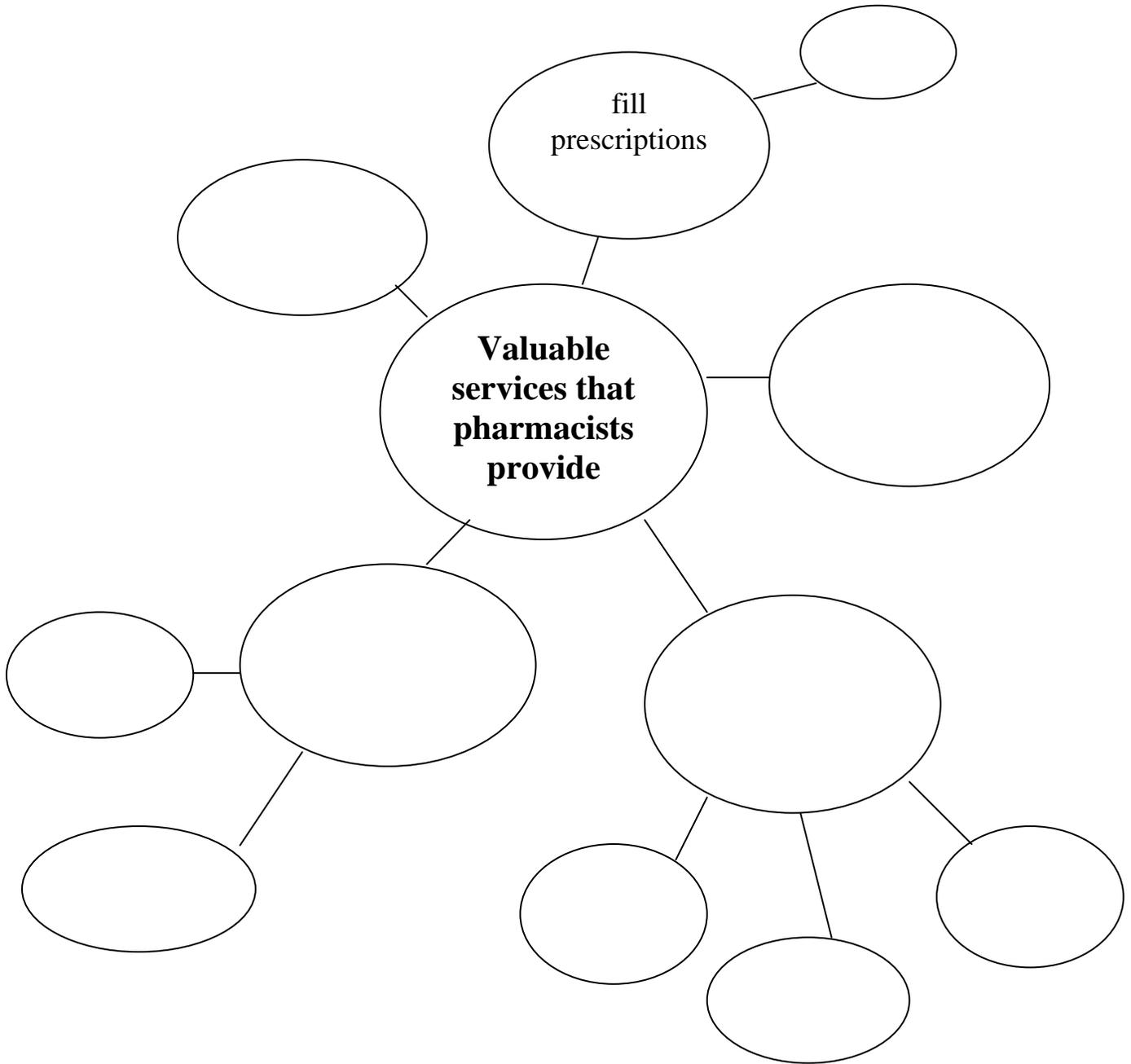
Pharmacists: Providing Valuable Services, continued

Pharmacists know more about how drugs affect our bodies than most doctors. Physicians usually take only one semester of drug-related courses in medical school. Pharmacists take at least three years of drug-related courses as part of their five-year program. They learn how drugs interact, how they affect the way the body processes foods, how long they remain in the body, and what the side effects can be.

Pharmacists also know about over-the-counter drugs, but people don't always think about discussing non-prescription drugs with a pharmacist. By asking questions about your symptoms, the pharmacist can help you decide whether to talk to a physician. If that doesn't seem necessary, the pharmacist can suggest an over-the-counter medicine.

Pharmacists: Providing Valuable Services Comprehension Check – Mapping

Directions: Graphic organizers can help you understand what you read. Below is one kind of graphic organizer, a “bubble” map. Work with a partner or with the class to fill in bubbles with main ideas and details from the article. A few examples are given. You can add bubbles if you need them, or leave some empty. You might want to draw a new organizer on a clean sheet of paper.



Pharmacists: Providing Valuable Services

Comprehension Check – Mapping Answer Key

This is one possible “bubble” map of the article. Answers will vary.

