

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

QUALITY USE OF PRESCRIPTION,- PATIENT PERCEPTIONS OF PHARMACISTS AND OVER-THE-COUNTER THERAPY (QUC-OTC)

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Submitted on: 28.03.16;

Revised on: 02.05.17;

Accepted on: 10.05.17

ABSTRACT:

BACKGROUND: Patient self-medication is the treatment of minor and self-limiting conditions with over the-counter (OTC) medications without direct physician recommendations.

AIM: To characterize patients use of OTC therapy and to assess role of pharmacist in prescribing over the counter drugs.

METHOD: Descriptive prospective observational study was done using structured questionnaires. 200 patients were included in study.

RESULTS: Of all the participants more than 90 % not aware that pharmacists could safely recommend OTC medications, the majority were interested in a pharmacist-guided OTC therapy service.

CONCLUSION: Patients demonstrated good awareness about some aspects of pharmacist roles and generally responded favorably when considering confidence in pharmacist knowledge and comfort with medication dispensing. The majority of these patients were interested in a pharmacist-guided OTC service for self-medication if it were available to them.

KEYWORDS: OTC, Role of pharmacist, Self medication.

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Indian Research Journal of Pharmacy and Science; 12(2017) 945-948

Journal Home Page: <https://www.irjps.in>

INTRODUCTION:

In India, it is very common to see self-medication practice and which is emerging challenge to health care providers. Self-medication is the selection and use of medicines by individuals to treat self-recognized illnesses or symptoms. For the purposes of this definition, medicines include herbal and traditional products. Self-medication is one element of self-care.

Now-a-days health care services getting costlier and in developing countries, health care facilities are not available. Hence, that time self-medication becomes an obvious choice of healthcare service. Furthermore, it has been noted that purchase of drugs and many drugs that can only be purchased with prescription in developed countries are OTC in developing countries. In addition, lax medical regulation has resulted in the proliferation of counter free drugs that are in high demand for the treatment of highly prevalent diseases.^{1,5}

Why do People Use Self-medication?

Modern consumers (patients) wish to take a greater role in the maintenance of their own health and are often competent to manage (uncomplicated) chronic and recurrent illnesses (not merely short-term symptoms) after proper medical diagnosis and with only occasional professional advice, e.g. use of histamine H₂-receptor blocker, topical corticosteroid, antifungal and oral contraceptive. They are understandably unwilling to submit to the inconvenience of visiting a doctor for what they rightly feel they can manage for themselves, given adequate information.⁸

Self-medication is very common and a number of reasons could be enumerated for it. Urge of self-care, feeling of sympathy toward family members in sickness, lack of time, lack of health services, financial constraint, ignorance, misbeliefs, extensive advertisement and availability of drugs in other than drug shops are responsible for growing trend of self-medication.⁷

Role of pharmacist

He is one of the key role players in educating his customers about the proper use of medicines, which

are intended for self-medication. For that necessary steps have to be taken in his training and practice.⁸

Pharmacists play a valuable role in identifying, solving and preventing drug-related problems for the purpose of achieving optimal patient outcomes and quality of life. Ambulatory based pharmacists have the opportunity and responsibility to foster safe, appropriate, effective and economical use of all medications, especially those therapies patients are self-selecting. Pharmacists should guide their customers to consult the physician before taking any medication by self.^{8,9} Unlike above role, pharmacists have following function as a:

Communicator

In order to address the condition of the patient appropriately the pharmacist must ask the patient key questions and pass on relevant information to him or her (e.g. How to take the medicines and how to deal with safety issues).

Quality drug supplier

The pharmacist must ensure that the products he/she purchases are from reputable sources and of good quality.

Trainer and supervisor

To achieve this pharmacist must develop a protocol for referral to the pharmacist, protocols for community health workers involved with the handling and distribution of medicines.

Collaborator

It is imperative that pharmacists develop quality collaborative relationships with the other health care professionals, national professional associations, the pharmaceutical industry, governments (local/national), patients and general public.

Health promoter

As a member of the health-care team, the pharmacist must participate in health screening to identify health problems and those at risk in the community, participate in health promotion campaigns to raise awareness of health issues and disease prevention, provide advice to individuals to help them make informed health choices.

Objectives

1. To determine, patients perception of pharmacist roles in an ambulatory care setting.
2. To characterize patients use of OTC

METHOD:

A prospective, non randomized, cross-sectional survey was done at pharmacy stores

The survey was done with help of pre-generated questioners over the period of 2 months.

Inclusion criteria:

Every patient with prescription processed at the pharmacy store.

Exclusion criteria:

Language barrier
Not interested candidate.

RESULT:

Total 200 patients were included in the study keeping in mind inclusion and exclusion criteria at the nearby pharmacy store

The questioner was divided into two parts

1. Demographics
2. Survey Response

Respondents Demographics

Table 1: Age wise distribution of patients.

Age Group	Number of patients (N=200)
26-35	12
36-45	78
46-55	58
56-65	43
66-75	9

Table 2 : Education qualification of patient

Education	Number of patients (N=200)
<10	7
10 th pass	4
12 pass	1
Graduate	76
PG	112

Table 3: Survey Responses

Survey Questions	Yes	No	Do not know
Did you know some medical conditions can be assessed by pharmacist?	9	90	1
Do you know certain medications be safely be prescribed by pharmacist?	85	9	6
Would you be interested in services provided by pharmacist?	100	0	0
Believes pharmacist give reliable drug advice w.r.t to OTC products.	90	3	7
Comfortable receiving drugs directly from pharmacist	100	100	0

Table 4: Preference of OTC products

Cold and cough	145
Pain	19
Headache	102
Fever	24

DISCUSSION:

In India, access to medications is easy. Many patients directly purchase medications from the Pharmacies because they are easily accessible, fast and less expensive than going to the doctor's clinic first. This is even more obvious in village areas where medical services are inadequate. Our study found that in most of the pharmacy 15-20 patients' visits per day for self medication drugs.

Most of the pharmacist reported that pharmacist and previous prescription is the source from where patient came to know about the choice of drug for self medication. The patients visiting were not aware that pharmacist could safely recommend

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OTC medications; the majorities were interested in a pharmacist guided OTC therapy service.

CONCLUSION:

This aims towards increasing patient awareness about pharmacist's roles and favorable response when considering confidence in pharmacist knowledge and comfort with medication dispensing.

The majority of these patients were interested in a pharmacist - guided OTC services for self medications if it were available to them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Author would like to thank the pharmacy store and patients for their co-operations and participation in the survey.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST REPORTED: NIL;

SOURCE OF FUNDING: NONE REPORTED