

ROLE OF PHARMACISTS IN ACCESSIBILITY OF OTC MEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

Pharmacists play a very important role in patient's life for self-medication. They are the “gate keepers” of our healthcare systems. Pharmacists play a vital role in developing and developed countries for accessibility of OTC (over-the-counter) medicines. India is a large country. India has large population where medical needs are more and the pharmacists in India also help to solve the problems of medical needs through their trainings they have received in their pharmaceutical education and the advice they provide to customers. The study of this paper will highlight the role of pharmacist as a communicator, quality medicine supplier, collaborator, trainer, supervisor and a healthcare promoter in some situations. The study in this paper will illustrate how the pharmacist helps the patient for proper selection of OTC medication. The study in this paper will explain the role of pharmacists promoting OTC drugs and the rule that they have to follow of Indian government to access the OTC medication for their customers (i.e. patients). A small study was conducted for research on a small group of pharmacists in Mumbai region and the data that was collected was analyzed using descriptive and statistical methods.

Keywords : Role, Pharmacists, OTC drugs, Self-medication, Customers, Law, India.

Introduction

Pharmacists are also called as druggists or chemists. They are individual professionals who practice in small or big scale pharmacies as healthcare professionals. Pharmacists are involved in delivery of medicines to patients. They are the professional how prepare and pack the medicines that are prescribed by the doctors/physicians to the patients and they also sell over-the counter (OTC) drugs or medicines to the customers (patients). There are two types of pharmacy community pharmacy and hospital pharmacy. Community pharmacy is also called as retail pharmacy. Community pharmacy deals with people directly of local areas and 95% of India's population purchase their drugs from them directly. The responsibility of the pharmacist in community pharmacy is counseling, checking and handing over of prescription drugs and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs to the patients with care, accuracy, and

within the legal laws of the government. The hospital pharmacy is a pharmacy that is within the premises of a hospital. They provide all the medicines required to the patients in the hospital and outside patients also. The hospital pharmacy has large stock of medicines as compared to community pharmacy. The responsibility of the pharmacist in hospital pharmacy is to advice the patients over the prescribed medicines and side effects and allergies related to does drugs because of some compounds use in it and that might not be suitable for some patients. All over the world the pharmacist follow good pharmacy practice. In the year 1992, FIP developed standards for pharmacy services entitled as “Good pharmacy practice (GPP) in community and hospital pharmacy”, which have been adopted and presented in a WHO document (WHO, 1996). **What is Good Pharmacy Practice (GPP)?**

Good pharmacy practice (GPP) as follows :

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- Good pharmacy practice requires that a chemist's main concern should be the welfare of the patients in all environments.
- Good Pharmacy Practice requires pharmacist for contribution in the promotion of rational and economic prescribing and appropriate usage of medicines.
- Good Pharmacy Practice requires that the main pharmacy activity is the supply of medicines and other products that are related to health care, good quality is assured, proper information and advice provided for the patient, and monitoring the effects of the usage of the drugs.

What is Self-Care?

Self-care can be defined as what an individual does for him/her to prevent from illness and maintain his/her health.

The broad concept of self-care :

- General hygiene and personal hygiene.
- Type and quality of food he/she consumes.
- Lifestyle an individual adapts for example sporting activities or leisure comfort.
- Living conditions, and social habits an individual adapts.
- Socioeconomic factors an individual lives in for example income level and cultural beliefs.
- Self-medication.

What is Self-Medication?

Self-Medication can be defined as choice and use of medicines that an individual consumes to treat his/her self-recognized illness.

We can say that self-medication is one of the elements of self-care. Responsible medication measures :

- Drugs used for self-recognized illness should be safety proven, assured quality and efficacy.
- Drugs should be designed for a purpose, and will require appropriate dosage actions.



Figure 1: Pharmacy

Over – the - counter (OTC) products should be supported by following information :

- How to consume the drugs.
- Effects and possible side-effects that may happen after consuming.
- How the effects of the drug should be monitored by the consumer.
- Precautions and warnings of the drug.
- Duration of usage of the drug.
- When to seek professional advice by the physician when the drug is not curing the symptoms.

Role of pharmacist in self-medication

Pharmacist in role as communicator - The pharmacist should start a dialogue with the patient to abstract a sufficient detailed medical history about him or her and even about the patient's physician, whenever they feel it is necessary to give some medication that are prescribed or OTC products. The pharmacist is a communicator to patients when they ask him/her about OTC drugs for immediate cure of disease at that time the pharmacist ask some fast questions what is happening to them, are you allergic to some chemicals they are used in preparing medicines like sulphur, then they instruct about the dosage they have to take and when to stop and if it does not cure in limited period they request them to visit the nearest health-care centers at earliest. A good pharmacist will provide objective information about medicines. A pharmacist keeps all the records of patient's physicians or doctors for concerns and should keep all the information of the patient confidential. The pharmacist should be able to help the patients to choice for self-medication products or OTC (over-the-counter) drugs when the patients need them with a proper instruction guide.

Pharmacist in role of quality medicine supplier – The pharmacist should be sure about the products he/she purchases are from the right channel and from reputed and well known OTC pharmaceutical companies in self-medication unit. The pharmacist should properly check the quality of the medicines and the expiry dates of all the medicines he/she purchases. The pharmacist should ensure that all the medicine products are stored in proper storage units as per the instructions of pharmaceutical companies on the packaging boxes of the products.

Pharmacist in role of trainer and supervisor – Sometimes the pharmacist has to act as a trainer and a supervisor to the individuals who are working in a pharmacy, as that staff is non-pharmacist staff and this staff assists them for providing services to the patients/customers.

It is the responsibility of the pharmacist to train his/her non-pharmacist staff. The pharmacist should also keep him/herself updated with new pharma medical developments and education studies and workshops. They should also promote workshops to train community health workers and NGOs young group of volunteers who are involved with the handling and distribution of medicines for charity work or awareness of medicines for people in rural areas.

Pharmacist in role as a collaborator – The pharmacist now a day's develop a good collaborative relationship with local and national bodies of the government, health care professionals, the pharmaceutical industry and general public or customers. By doing this the pharmacist improve self-care and self-medication knowledge among individuals. **Pharmacist in role of health-care promoter** – Pharmacist take part in health promotion campaigns to aware people of health issues and new diseases and their prevention. Pharmacist also organize camps outside their pharmacy for health check-up for example blood pressure, sugar check-up camp and so on and also promote health care products during those camps and prevention drugs that are suitable and under the law of Indian government (for example they sell products like blood sugar checkup machine, blood pressure machine, sugar free products).

During these camps they screen individual who are that risk or unaware of their health problems, then they advice them to consult their respective physicians or doctors for further treatment.

Ethical and commercial factors of Pharmacist

Pharmacists commercially livelihood is based on product sales only, but these should never be principal focus of any pharmacist. The healthcare product selection should be very appropriate to the need and situation of the patient, and based on informed judgments. But, whenever there is a necessity, the patient must be referred to a

physician.

Pharmacist role in helping patients for proper selection of OTC products

- The pharmacist counsel patients on the proper use of the selected range of product including dosage, dosage interval time, route of administration, and recommended days of therapy, as well as how to properly store the OTC products.
- The pharmacist always reminds the consumer not to exceed the recommended dosage of OTC drugs.
- Emphasize the importance of reading the labels on OTC medicines before consuming any medication and discarding expired medications as soon as possible.
- The pharmacist recommends that consumers consult a doctor if the symptoms do not improve.
- The pharmacist reminds consumers always to use OTC drugs that treat particular symptoms.
- The pharmacist advises patients to be cautioned when using many medications at same time if unsure; they should consult a well experienced healthcare professional.
- The pharmacist always advises the consumers to inform their doctors which medication they are currently taking.
- They advise patients to consult their respective doctors before any usage of OTC products if they have any preexisting medical conditions.
- The pharmacist always remind parents/caretakers of pediatric patients to always use calibrated tools for measuring the medication before giving the pediatric patient and to only give those OTC products that are developed for the use of pediatric patients only and no adult OTC products.
- The pharmacist always stress for seeing a proper guidance from a well known healthcare professional whenever if a consumer has a doubt of using an OTC product or any other healthcare products.

Study of Sample :

A study was conducted in particular areas of Mumbai and understands the percentage of OTC medication sold by pharmacists.

Pharmacist Area	OTC Drugs Sale Percentage
Byculla	70%
Mazgoan	65%
Worli	80%
Chembur	76.25%
Dadar	82.50%
Airoli	88.50%
Kharghar	71%

Table 1: Sample data of Pharmacist group from Mumbai areas.

Categories of Individual Consuming OTC Medication	Impact Rating
Job Holders	9
Business Personal	6.5
College Students	8
Housewives	5
Children	1

Table 2: Categories of Individual Consuming OTC Medication

The above table 2 shows the number of individuals consuming OTC medication along with impact rating.

Conclusion :

This study has displayed the percentage of OTC medication consumption along with the impact of a pharmacist in accessibility. This study explains the importance of a pharmacist role in our day-to-day life and the importance of his/her advise that an individual receive before purchasing an OTC medication for self treatment or self- care. Further studies can be carried on the role of pharmacist in self-care and importance of pharmacist in our day-to-day life.

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