



Assessment of Knowledge and Practice of community pharmacist and Patient towards over the counter medication Use.

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INTRODUCTION:

Over the counter (OTC) medicines are the group of drugs that can be sold without the prescription of a registered medical practitioner to the consumers. They are also known as nonprescription medicines. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), OTC medicines are drugs approved by health authorities to treat minor ailments and symptoms. OTC medicines include Analgesics and Antipyretics, Anti-histaminics, Anti-diarrhoeals, Vitamins, Calcium, Anti-gastritis, Anti cold and laxatives.

OTC drugs are considered an important component of primary health care system. If used appropriately, it can save the customers time and money by providing them safe and effective treatments for many commonly occurring illness. But inappropriate use of OTCs may lead to chances of adverse effect, drug interaction, drug abuse, misuse and antibiotic resistance.¹

At the community level, good self-medication practices can provide benefits such as saving scarce medical resources from being wasted on minor conditions, controlling chronic diseases, and reducing absenteeism from work due to minor ailments. However, inappropriate self-medication with OTC drugs can have serious implications (including deaths), especially in extremes of ages (paediatrics and geriatrics), pregnant and lactating mothers, and patients with co-morbidities. Globally, increasing inappropriate self-medication is seen as a public health concern.²

In India OTC drugs are not legally recognized, all the drugs that are not comprised in the prescription drugs list are known as non-prescription drugs or OTC drugs. Prescription drugs that fall under two schedules; Schedule H and Schedule X. Drugs falling under Schedule G require the following mandatory text on the label: — Caution: It is dangerous to take this preparation except under medical supervision and hence is not advertised to the public voluntarily by the industry. In India, the import, manufacture, distribution and sale of drugs and cosmetics are regulated by the Drugs and Cosmetics Act (DCA) and its subordinate legislation, the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules (DCR). This legislation applies to the whole of India and to all sorts of medicines (e.g. allopathic, ayurvedic, homeopathic, etc.) whether imported or made in India. Legislation is enforced by the Central Government in New Delhi, which is responsible for its overall supervision. The OTC Committee of the Organization of Pharmaceutical Producers of India is working towards the awareness of responsible self-medication with a view to increase the OTC sector. It is aiming to get regulatory support for issues such as the accessibility of

household OTC remedies and increasing the awareness of the importance of responsible self-medication with the general public and the Government.

The Drug & Magic Remedies Act mentions a list of diseases for which advertising is not permitted. It also prohibits misleading advertisements, which, directly or indirectly, give false impressions regarding the true character of the drug; make false claims, or are otherwise false or misleading in any particular respect. The following OTC medicines advertising can be seen on TV in India

Digestives, Antacids, Cold rubs and analgesic balms/creams

- Vitamins/tonics/health supplements (especially Ayurveda-registered)
- Medicated skin treatment, Analgesic, Antiseptic creams/liquids
- Glucose powders, Cough liquids, Band-Aid, Baby gripe water.

The significant part of taking or giving drugs happens before taking or giving that drug: the act of reading and understanding the information on the label. This is a simple way to prevent unpleasant consequences, because OTC medicines are often used without health professional advice.³

OBJECTIVES:

1. To assess the pharmacists practice toward dispensing over the counter medicines in Community Pharmacy
2. Dispensing patterns OTC medications in the three pharmacies.
3. To know the awareness levels of consumers about OTC drugs.

METHODOLOGY:

This research is an observational research with cross sectional research design. The total number of respondents involved were 95.. And study was conducted on three community pharmacists present in the community pharmacy of Karad and Malkapur city. Predesigned and locally validated questionnaire consisting of 10 questions for each Pharmacist and patient were taken for the collection of data.

The study was a community based descriptive study done for 2 months. The data of the study was analyzed by using MS Excel.

RESULTS:

We have done the screening of three community pharmacists and 95 patients/ consumers knowledge and practice related to OTC medication use and the observed results are as follows:

Knowledge of Patients/ Consumers related to OTC use:

Almost all respondents stated that they had practiced self-medication with OTC drugs. The majority of respondents reported that they sought information or instruction from directly by community pharmacists (56%) and medical doctors consult (30%). Others (10%) reported that they got advice from friends and relatives, whilst the remainder (4%) used the internet or mobile applications as a source of information.

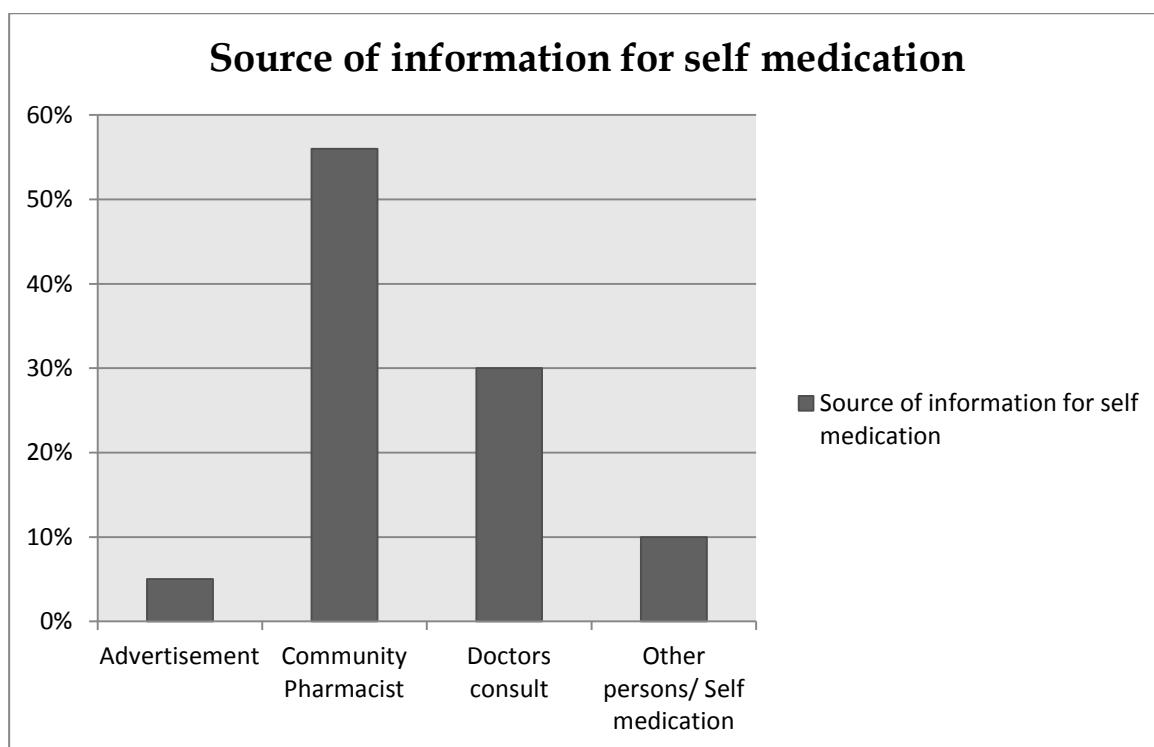


Fig No.1 Source of information for self medication.

- Commonly Dispensed OTC Medicines by the Pharmacies:**

Analgesics and antipyretics, drugs for gastritis, antiprotozoals and antihistamines were the most commonly dispensed drugs by the pharmacies. This indirectly shows that the reason for consuming OTC where fever and pain followed by Gastric related issues in our study group.

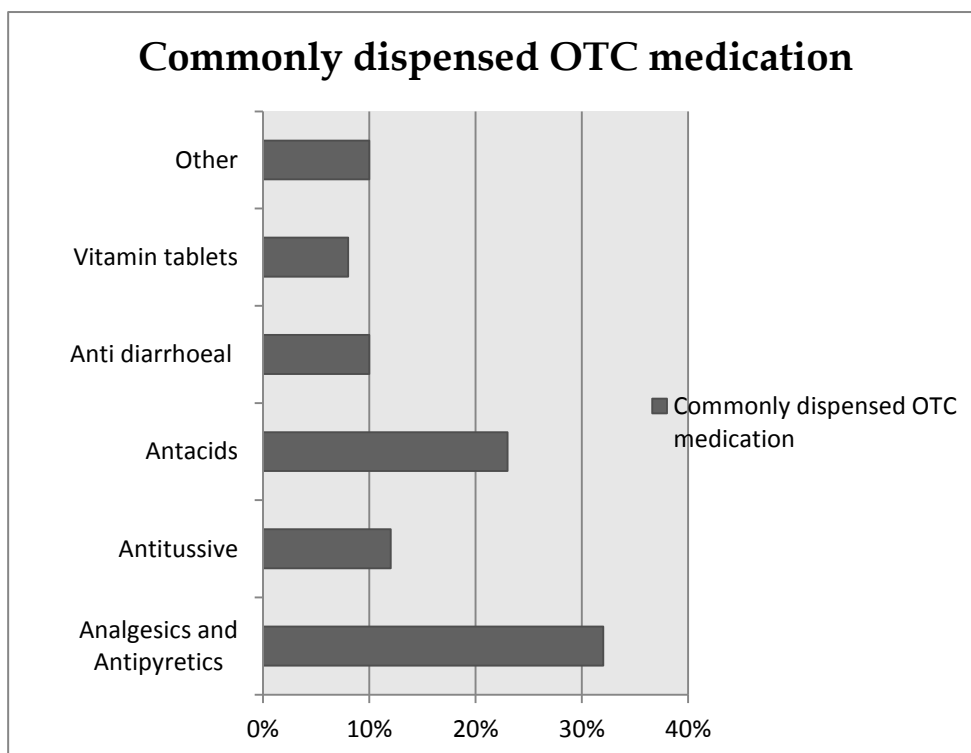


Fig No.2 Commonly dispensed OTC medications.

- The common reasons quoted for self-medicating with OTC drugs were ease of accessibility and for treating minor symptoms (55%), saving time (5%), saving money (25%), and getting quick relief (20%).

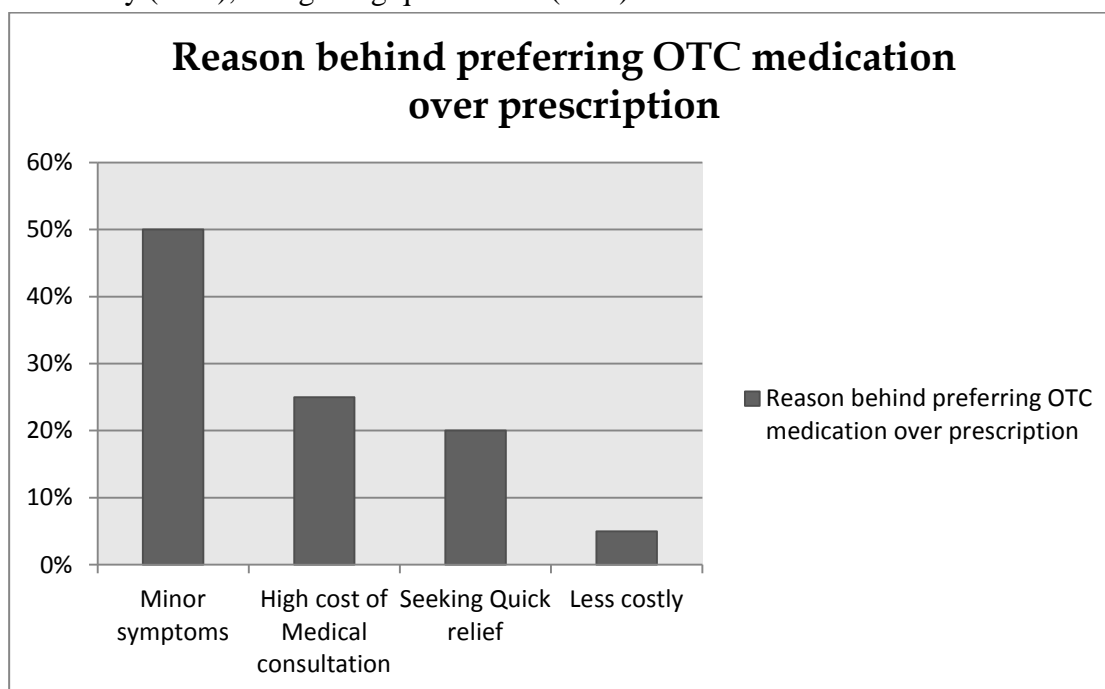


Fig No.3 Reason behind preferring OTC medication over prescription.

- Out of all study population, we can see 24% of individuals rated themselves high on the awareness of name of OTC medicines, 37% rated themselves average on the awareness and 39% rated themselves unawareness about the name of OTC medicines.

Around 29% of the respondents said that they always read package insert(s) and 40% said that they always check expiry dates when purchasing OTC drugs. Around 31%, admitted that they never read anything and never checked expiry dates.

Table No.1 Questionnaire for patient or consumer.

Sr. No.	Questionnaire for Patient or consumer	Yes	No	Sometimes	Rarely
1.	Do you know the name of medicine you are taking?	20%	39%	30%	11%
2.	Do you take OTC medication without reading leaflet or expiration date?	29%	37%	34%	0%
3.	Whether you have come across any complications after using OTC drugs?	2%	98%	0%	0%
4.	Does pharmacist provide information about drug allergies/ contraindications/Food interactions?	65%	0%	30%	0%
5.	Do you believe that OTC medicines are as effective as those prescribed by Doctors?	83%	0%	15%	0%

- Ninety five out of the only two respondents who had practiced self-medication admitted that they had come across complications after using OTC drugs.

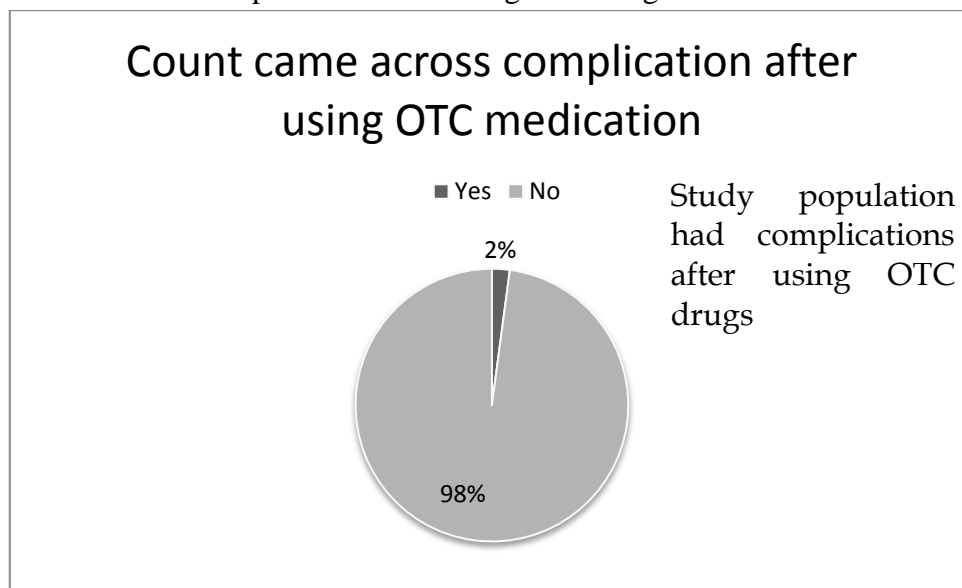


Fig No.4 Population count came across complications after using OTC medication.

- Of those who had self-medicated, only 1% had experienced or detected dispensing error in the community pharmacist following the consumption of OTC drugs. And in the management to overcome the dispensing error the response is observed as a absence of action by that 1% study population.

Knowledge and practice of Community Pharmacist related to OTC use:

A total of three pharmacies with three pharmacists were included in this study; among them, two were females and one was male.

- Of the total pharmacists, two pharmacists were qualified in Diploma in Pharmacy and one pharmacist holding Master degree in Pharmacy.

And it was observed that the total number of consumers or patients asking for OTC medication is 40-50 individuals per day among 26% of study population purchasing OTC medication once a day and 50% of study population once a week, which includes 65% males and 34% females.

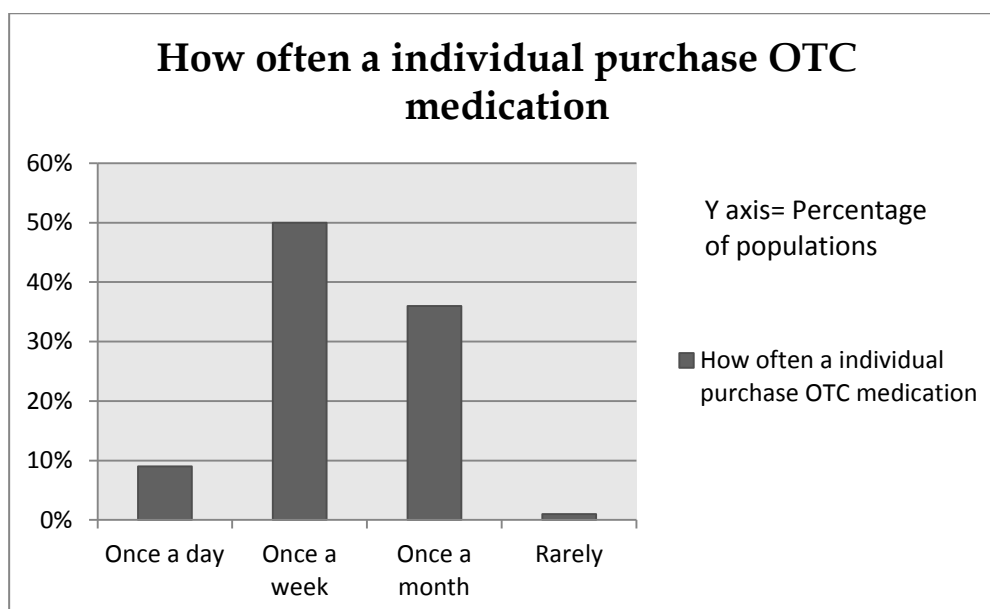


Fig No. 5 How often a individual purchase OTC medication.

- A total of 70% of pharmacists always counsel and 30% pharmacists sometimes counsel the patient before dispensing OTC medication regarding the use of OTC medicines. And 90% of community pharmacist always educate/counsel the patient after dispensing drugs.

By asking the consumer complaints, Pharmacists can understand the seriousness of the problem. This ultimately helps pharmacists in proper counselling of patients about their medications and occurring problem.

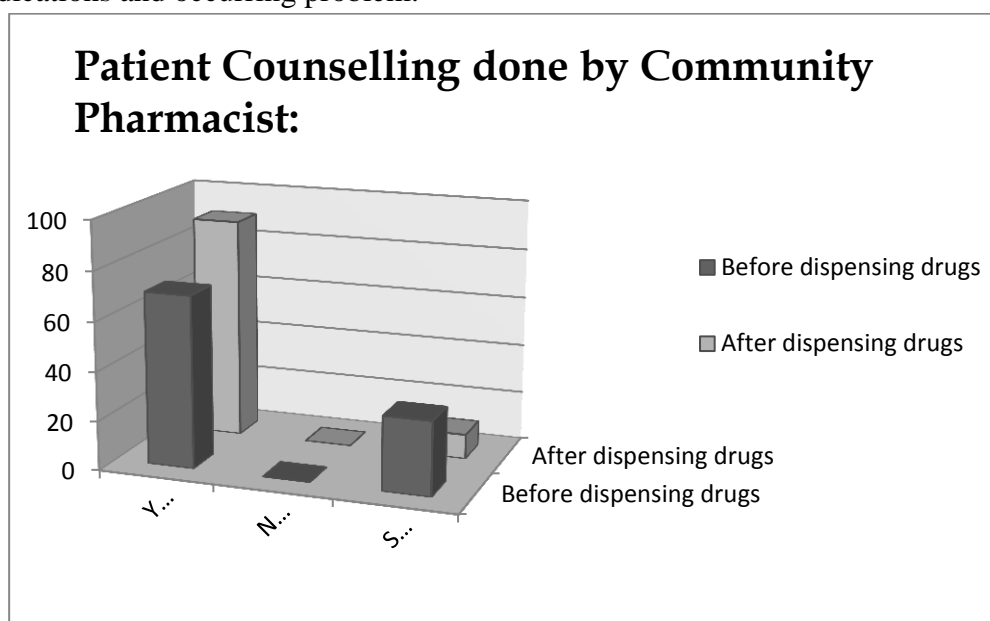


Fig No.6 Patient counselling done by Community Pharmacist before and after the dispensing of drugs.

Pharmacists Practice and Opinion Regarding OTC Drugs:

According to the choice of OTC medications, 42% of pharmacists had dispensed by their own choice, 34% of pharmacist had dispensed OTC medications by consumer's choice, and 24% of pharmacists had dispensed OTC medications by both. Hence, Pharmacist choice predominated other factors.

- Most of the consumer purchased OTC drugs by brand name as reported by all three pharmacists which showed that 90% of pharmacists were dispensed OTC drugs by brand name. So this practice does not comply with the guideline given by WHO which states that every medicine should be dispensed by generic name.

DISCUSSION:

All three pharmacists were qualified to dispense medication. Majority of the pharmacy encountered more than 50 consumers per day. Analgesics and antipyretics, drugs for gastritis, antiprotozoals and antihistamines were the most commonly dispensed OTC drugs by the pharmacists. Fever, common cold and headache were the most common symptoms told by the patients/consumers. Average working hour of pharmacists was found to be 7-8 hours per day. Most of the consumer purchased OTC drugs by brand name as reported by the pharmacists.

Our study shows that majority of the population are using OTC medicines and significant number of population are not aware of the side effects caused by OTC medicines. Most of them seek information regarding dosage based on previous experience, and internet, by checking the package or guessing by themselves which is a risky behaviour. On the other hand, the reported habit of reading the package insert before using medicines was very low.

Understanding the sources of information is helpful in designing interventional scheme to promote safe self-medication practice. Thorough knowledge regarding the pharmacology of the medicine, other medication and medical history of the patient and effective patient counselling can reduce problems associated with OTC use.

Low educational level, poor knowledge, religion and occupational status of the respondents (students) were significantly associated with the risky practice of self-medication with OTC drugs. Truth to this nature, health education on medication through different media outlets and in health facilities has paramount importance to promote the safe/appropriate use of OTC drugs.

CONCLUSION:

OTC medications are drugs which can be brought without a prescription but still the safety related to the use of OTC medicines mainly lies in the hands of the community pharmacist who is dispensing the same. So as per our study it has been observed that all the community pharmacist who were rendering their services are qualified by education and training. They were providing the counselling services when a patient comes for OTC medication. Thorough knowledge regarding the pharmacology of the medicine, other medication and medical history of the patient and effective patient counselling can reduce problems associated with OTC use.

They were also aware in which schedule OTC drugs has been included.

Also our study shows that majority of the population are using OTC medicines and significant number of population are not aware about the details of the OTC medication which they want to purchase and the side effects caused by OTC medicines.

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