

A Qualitative Study on Community Pharmacies across the United Arab Emirates in Terms of Pharmacists View about the Facilities Offered, Demographic Details, Prescription Received and Types of Minor Ailments Being Treated With Over the Counter Medications

Mohathasim Billah A, Raja D I, Venkatesan P, Rizwan Uz Zaman

Department of Pharmacy, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract

The study conducted across UAE to demonstrate the current scenerio of the community pharmacy with the intention to improve further to maximise the utilization of the profession for the betterment of the public healthcare. The result of the study discuss the facilities offered in the community pharmacy, treating the patient for their minor ailments up on proper counseling and if required necessiates reference to the other sector of the healthcare team to prevent further complications of the symptoms in a professional touch. The pharmacist in the community pharmacy are easily accessible to the public than the any other healthcare profession. The study on community pharmacies on their services offered, facilities available and the minor ailments which can be treated by over the counter medicines by a professional pharmacist can lead to betterment of the healthcare in the community. The method to conduct the study was qualitative by presenting 200 questionnaires each given to individual pharmacist in the community pharmacy contains four pages about their service owe to the public who were their regular customers and patients from any nearby source clinic or hospitals, also contains other details about the availability of medical equipment, cosmetic, skincare, health checkups, dispensing prescriptions and treating with Over the Counter Medication for minor ailments. As most of the minor ailments are being presented to evaluate the condition may need immediate medical attention, the pharmacist as a professional being a frontline of healthcare provider, can judge in right time to refer in order to provide a healthy environment and prevent further complications.

Keywords: *Community Pharmacy, Professional, Pharmacist, Healthcare*

INTRODUCTION

Community Pharmacists are the health professional with expertise knowledge of the medicine and health related issues who are accessible to the public easily at no cost, no appointment requirements. The ease of access to enquire about their health related issues gives a comfort and peace of mind for the health related panic issues among the public those unaware of minor health problems. A qualitative study in the United Arab Emirates over Community Pharmacy in terms of services offered, the facilities available, available items other than the prescription medicines, the types of minor ailments that can be treated by pharmacists upon proper counseling and professional advice and possible information that can benefit the betterment of the public healthcare [1-3]. Community Pharmacists play a crucial role in optimizing medication use and improving patient outcomes over their therapy, whilst preventing medication misuse and reducing errors. The profession expects pharmacists to ensure that they are competent in any area in which such advice is given to the public. A constructive pharmacist-patient relationship is essential to sound health care practice and the optimal well being of the patient. More pharmacy programs were launched in UAE to meet the high demand and satisfy the professional requirements of the country [4-6].

AIM AND OBJECTIVE

The focus of pharmacists as traditional drug dispensers has shifted to more active and participative role in risk assessment and other medication related consultation activities. Previous studies have found generally favorable evidence for pharmacist consultation services on various outcomes such as patient medication adherence, reduction in hospital admission, mortality and overall health care costs. The aim of the study focus to give a brief idea on community pharmacy services, professional advice by counseling the patients for the better adherence to medication regime and to avail better therapeutic outcomes. Services offered by professionally qualified pharmacist gives high standard healthcare to the public, hence the study done for improving the current scenario to achieve satisfactory professionalism.

METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire with options to choose their type of facilities distributed to 200 pharmacies and got 192 successful completed forms in United Arab Emirates. The questionnaire contains the section of information about the pharmacy, facilities available, the type of OTC medications dispensed, the services that can be offered by the community pharmacist to the public who is approaching for their medication requirements and counseling. Many of the reasons why patients did not ask for consultation are

attributable to pharmacies suggested a need for improvement in their services [7-8]. The contents for the survey were targeted to collect the facilities available, available items other than the prescription medicines, the types of minor ailments that can be treated by pharmacists upon proper counseling and professional advice, nearby prescribers specialties, most prescribed medicines, demographic data of the pharmacy setup, the need by the patients, the pharmacists opinion about the information for best adherence and compliance, the categories of questions asked by the people to pharmacists and varieties of items available in the pharmacy. The aim of the study was to necessitate professional service inside the community pharmacy as need of the hour. A constructive pharmacist-patient relationship is essential to sound healthcare practice and the optimal well being of the patient [9-14].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected being analyzed about the facilities offered in the most community pharmacies as response from the Pharmacist reflects (n=192) dispensing over the counter medication (96%) with proper counseling (79%) and selling the skincare products in addition to their service on dispensing the prescribed medication (83%) by the specialties. The community pharmacies play a less important role in handling and dispensing of controlled medication (38%) and even though the number is less the responsibility being the top priority and given high importance to maintain zero error. Very few pharmacies ready to offer the first aid for their patients (25%) as being referred to the emergency team to handle, in rare cases being done at the pharmacy premise depend on the situation of the scenario. Health checkups such as blood glucose (8%), blood pressure (21%) monitoring are performed rarely.

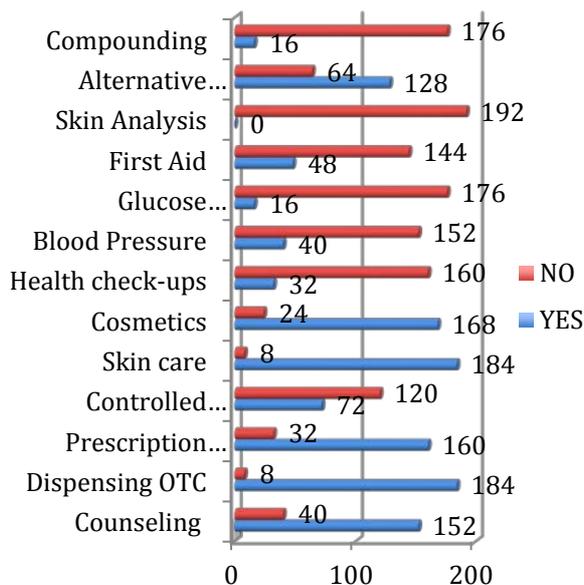


Fig.1 Facilities available in the community pharmacies

Most Prescribed Medicines	Yes	No
Analgesics	160 (83%)	32 (17%)
Antihypertensive	64 (33%)	128 (67%)
Anti-diabetics	72 (38%)	120 (63%)
Narcotics	8 (4%)	184 (96%)
NSAIDs	136 (71%)	56 (29%)
Bronchodialators	32(17%)	160 (83%)
Antibiotics	184 (96%)	8 (4%)
Antidepressants	16 (8%)	176 (92%)
Antipsychotics	8 (4%)	184 (96%)
Muscle relaxants	24 (13%)	168 (87%)
Opioids	8 (4%)	184 (96%)
Aphrodisiac	8 (4%)	184 (96%)
Vaccines	8 (4%)	184 (96%)
Antihistamines	112 (58%)	80 (42%)
Hormones	16 (8%)	176 (84%)
Steroids	8 (4%)	184 (92%)
Insulin	32 (17%)	160 (83%)
Contraceptives	72 (38%)	120 (62%)

Table1 Most Prescribed medicines by the specialties

The most prescribed medication analysis directly depends on the nearest prescribers to the particular pharmacy set up, although the antibiotics (96%) and analgesics (83%) top the rank (Table.1). The result necessitates the further study on use of antibiotics and analgesics over the dispensing patterns and counseling part of the professional in the community pharmacies. Study area being inadvertently falls under (Fig.2) General Practitioners (71%), Dentists (42%), Pediatrician (25%) and Obstetrics and Gynecologist (25%). The impact of prescribers does not affect the result of the study in general as other specialties prescription dispensed at the hospital itself.

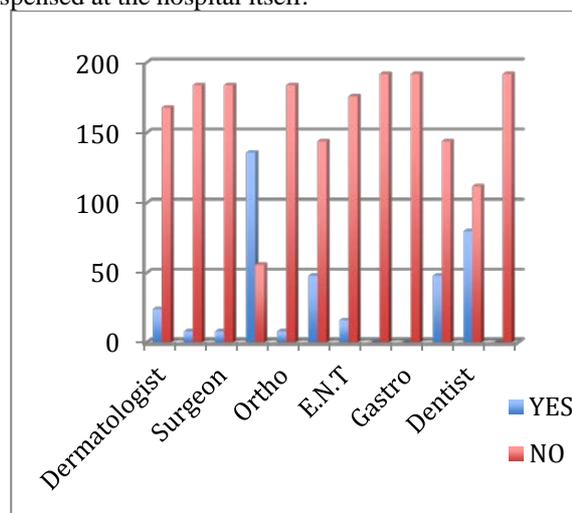


Fig. 2 Prescribers of the study area

The study evaluating the treatment of minor ailments with the OTC medications and most sold OTC medicines gives the significance of professional service and need of updated knowledge to the community pharmacist in the practicing setup. When analyzing the most sold medication

among the community pharmacies (n=192) the study reveals that analgesics (92%), cold and flu (83%) medications in general, vitamins (67%), antihistamines (58%), anti-inflammatory (58%), Antipyretics (54%), antitussives and laxatives (50%). The use of those listed OTC medication indicates the professionals to make the therapy appropriate, rational and safe for the patients by giving the guidance in right way at the right time. The conditions treated widely in the pharmacies by qualified pharmacists shown (Fig.3) reveals significance of the pharmacist role, the services offered for the society for the betterment of the healthcare, as the most of the minor ailments that bothers the health of the people are being presented to the pharmacists to evaluate further and guide them further to avoid any complications that may arise due to the symptoms alerted by pharmacist by the professional experience and directed to the other specialties of healthcare accordingly. The study shows the minor ailments treated in the community pharmacy were fever, common cold, running nose, sneezing, minor sunburn, constipation, headache, diarrhea, travel sickness, abdominal cramps, gastritis, acid reflux, dysmenorrhea, sore throat, skin allergies, urine alkalizer, slimming aids, etc.. All the qualified pharmacists responding the questioner gave (100%) full response for treating fever, common cold, running nose, constipation and headache, the maximum answered next was positive for sneezing (96%), slimming aid (96%) such as natural fat burners, minor sunburns (92%), diarrhea (92%), travel sickness (79%), abdominal cramps (88%), acid reflux (79%), gastritis (75%) and few has restrictions to treat the dysmenorrhea (58%). The overall study gives a significant impact on healthcare system, their ability to make a professional judgement regarding the appropriate action in response to patient symptoms, including self-treatment or referral to other services. Patient-guided counseling in community pharmacies fosters patient participation in medication counseling⁷. A community pharmacist must provide counseling to consumers of nonprescription medicines and promote responsible self-medication⁸.

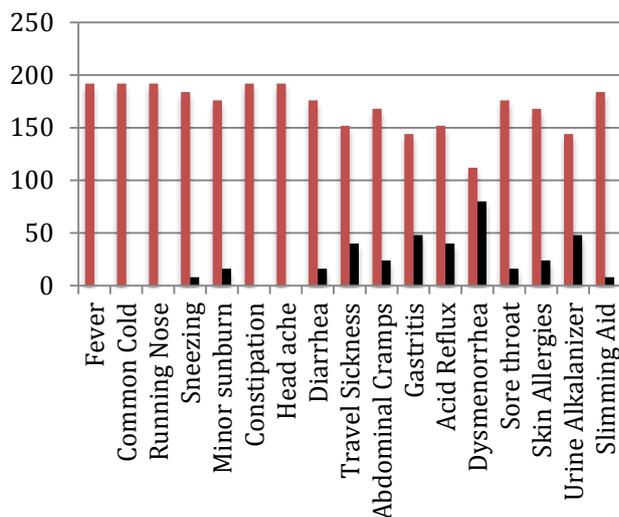


Fig. 3 Categories of ailments treated with OTC medication in the community pharmacies

The population in UAE is from different parts of the world, the most people in the study area were (Fig. 4) found to be nationals of middle-east region (83%), South Asians (54%), Europeans (28%), Philippines (28%), Africans (13%), Americans (17%), Russians (8%) and Chinese (4%). The study does not have any language barrier since the adopted language in the region being English even though the majority of population mother language as Arabic contributes to the success of the study.

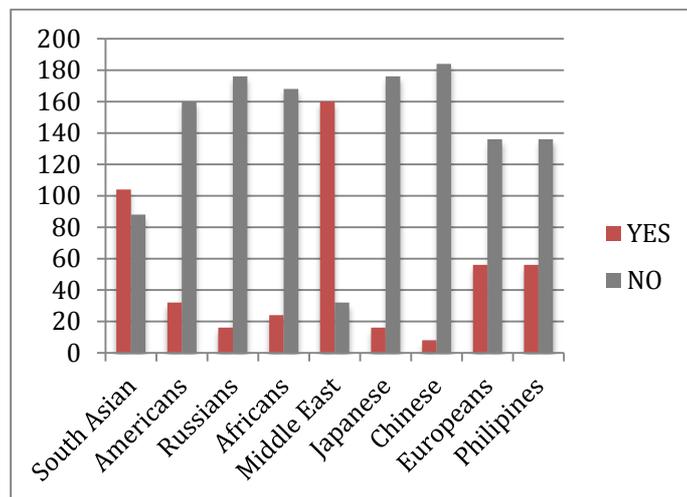


Fig.4 Demographic details about the patients in community pharmacies

CONCLUSION

The community pharmacies can undertake many initiatives within their objectives by increasing the awareness and involvement as the pharmacists are experts in pharmaceutical care, health promotion and act as gateway to the healthcare system, disease prevention and chronic disease management. As most of the minor ailments are being presented to evaluate the condition may need immediate medical attention in the community pharmacy, the pharmacist as a professional frontline of healthcare provider, can judge in right time to refer and provide a healthy environment to prevent further complications. Confidence in the quality of the counseling and the interaction will depend on the pharmacist taking sufficient time to gain important information before offering advice. The study reveals many results that significantly have impact on public health. The public is entitled to expect that medicines purchased over the counter will be safe, effective and appropriate for the condition to be treated. The profession expects pharmacists to ensure that they are competent in any area in which such advice is given to the public.

REFERENCES

1. The Role of the Pharmacist in the Health Care System, Report of a WHO Consultative Group New Delhi, India; 13-16 December 1988.
2. D, Burgos F, Gascón MP. The Role of Community Pharmacies in Respiratory Disease Control.Castillo. Arch Bronconeumol. 2015; 51(9): 429-430.
3. Subal C. Basak, and Dondeti Sathyanarayana. Pharmacy Education in India. American journal of pharmaceutical education. 2010; 74(4): 68.

4. Subal C. Basak, and Dondeti Sathyanarayana. Community Pharmacy Practice in India: Past, Present and Future. *South Med Rev.* 2009; 2(1): 11-14.
5. DA Rocha CE, Bispo ML, Dos Santos AC, Mesquita AR, Brito GC, de Lyra DP. Assessment of Community Pharmacists' Counseling Practices With Simulated Patients Who Have Minor Illness: A Pilot Study. *Jr. Simul Healthc.* 2015; 10(4): 227-238.
6. M. L. Skomo. Migraineurs Perceptions of and Interactions with Pharmacists: A Qualitative Study," *International Journal of Pharmacy Practice.* 2008; 16(6): 357-363
7. C. A. Hughes, L. M. Guirguis, T. Wong, K. Ng, L. Ing and K. Fisher. Influence of Pharmacy Practice on Community Pharmacists' Integration of Medication and Lab Value Information from Electronic Health Records. *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association.* 2011; 51(5): 591-598.
8. M. Ortiz, W. Walker and R. Tomas. Observation of Community Pharmacist's Work Activities: How Much Skilled and Professional. *Australian Journal of Pharmacy.* 1988; 7: 20-25.
9. L. B. Angelo and S. P. Ferreri. Assessment of Work Flow Redesign in Community Pharmacy. *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association.* 2005; 45(2): 145-150.
10. A. Garman, T. Burkhart and J. Strong. Business Knowledge and Skills. *Journal of Healthcare Management.* 2006; 51(2): 81-85.
11. J. Stephenson, "Getting Down to Business. *British Medical Journal.* 2009; 339 (7731): 1170-1171.
12. Subal Chandra Basak and Dondeti Sathyanarayana. Evaluating medicines dispensing patterns at private community pharmacies in Tamilnadu, India. *Southern Med Review.* 2010; 3(2): 27-31.
13. Patrick Hardigan, Manuel Carvajal. Job Satisfaction among Practicing Pharmacists: A Rasch Analysis. *The Internet Journal of Allied Health Sciences and Practice.* 2007; 5(4): 1-9.
14. SivakamiJanahiraman, and Thomas Paraidathathu. Job Satisfaction among Malaysian Pharmacists. *Jurnal Sains Kesehatan Malaysia.* 2007; 5(2):5 79-90.