



“Survey on Commonly Used OTC Medicines in Medical stores”

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ABSTRACT

Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs are medicines that can be purchased without a doctor's prescription and are commonly used for the treatment of minor illnesses such as fever, headache, cough, cold, acidity, allergies, and body pain. These medicines play an important role in self-care and primary healthcare by providing quick and convenient access to treatment for common health conditions. The present study was conducted to understand the pattern of OTC drug usage, consumer behavior, commonly sold medicines, and the role of pharmacists in guiding patients. A three-day survey was carried out at three local medical stores through observation and interaction with pharmacists and consumers.

The findings revealed that analgesics, antacids, cough syrups, cold remedies, and vitamin supplements were among the most frequently purchased OTC medicines. Adults and middle-aged individuals were found to be the major users of these medications. Most consumers preferred OTC drugs because of their easy availability, affordability, and ability to provide quick relief from minor health problems.

The study also highlighted the important role of pharmacists in recommending suitable medicines and providing dosage instructions. Although OTC medicines offer several benefits, their inappropriate use may lead to adverse drug reactions, overdose, drug interactions, and delayed diagnosis of serious illnesses. In conclusion, OTC drugs are an essential component of modern healthcare systems. However, public awareness, responsible self-medication practices, pharmacist counseling, and effective regulatory control are necessary to ensure their safe and rational use.

KEYWORDS

Over-the-Counter (OTC) Drugs, Self-Medication, Consumer Awareness, Pharmacist Counseling, Non-Prescription Medicines, Drug Safety

INTRODUCTION

Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs are medicines that can be obtained without a prescription from a registered medical practitioner. These medicines are widely used for the treatment of minor health conditions such as fever, headache, cough, cold, acidity, allergies, and body pain. Due to their easy availability and convenience, OTC medicines have become an important part of self-care and primary healthcare systems worldwide.

In recent years, the use of OTC medicines has increased significantly. Many individuals prefer self-medication for common illnesses because it saves time, reduces healthcare costs, and provides immediate relief from symptoms. Commonly used OTC products include analgesics, antacids, antihistamines, cough and cold preparations, vitamin supplements, and topical preparations.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), self-medication refers to the use of medicines by individuals to treat self-recognized illnesses or symptoms without professional medical supervision. While responsible self-medication can provide several benefits, inappropriate use of OTC medicines may result in incorrect diagnosis, overdose, adverse drug reactions, drug interactions, and delayed treatment of serious diseases. Pharmacists play a vital role in ensuring the safe use of OTC medicines by providing appropriate guidance regarding dosage, precautions, and possible side effects. In India, the regulation of medicines is governed by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Rules. Although India does not have a separate legal category specifically defined for OTC medicines, several commonly used medicines are available for non-prescription sale.

The increasing use of OTC medicines highlights the need for public awareness regarding their safe and rational use. Therefore, this study was conducted to evaluate the pattern of OTC drug utilization, consumer behavior, pharmacist involvement, and challenges associated with self-medication practices.

RISK OF SELF-MEDICATION

- Self-medication has become increasingly common due to the easy availability of medicines and the convenience of treating minor illnesses without visiting a doctor. However, inappropriate self-medication can lead to several health risks and complications.
- One of the major risks is incorrect self-diagnosis. Individuals may misinterpret their symptoms and select unsuitable medicines, which can delay the diagnosis and treatment of serious medical conditions. Even when a person correctly identifies a health problem, there is still a possibility of choosing the wrong medication or inappropriate therapy.
- Many consumers are unaware of important pharmacological factors such as proper dosage, duration of treatment, contraindications, warnings, and precautions. This lack of knowledge can increase the risk of adverse drug reactions, overdose, and treatment failure. In addition, people may unknowingly take medicines containing the same active ingredient under different brand names, resulting in double medication and potential toxicity.

- Incorrect dosage, prolonged use, and inappropriate administration of medicines can further increase the likelihood of adverse outcomes. Excessive consumption of OTC drugs such as paracetamol, NSAIDs, or cough preparations may cause liver damage, kidney impairment, gastrointestinal problems, or other serious complications.

History of OTC Drugs in India

Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs are medicines that can be obtained without a prescription from a registered medical practitioner. These medicines are commonly used for the management of minor health conditions such as fever, headache, cough, cold, acidity, allergies, and mild pain. have become an essential part of self-care and contribute significance.

1. Development of Drug Regulation in India

The origin of OTC medicines in India is closely linked to the evolution of pharmaceutical regulations. Prior to independence, there were limited laws governing the quality, safety, and sale of medicines. To address these concerns, the Government of India enacted the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, which established the legal framework for regulating drugs and cosmetics in the country. This was further supported by the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945, which provided detailed guidelines for the manufacture, distribution, and sale of pharmaceutical products.

2. Emergence of OTC Medicines in India

Unlike several Western countries, India did not initially recognize OTC medicines as a separate legal category. Instead, medicines that were not listed under restricted schedules such as Schedule H, Schedule H1, and Schedule X were generally available without a prescription. Over time, increasing health awareness, easier access to medicines, and the need for quick relief from minor ailments encouraged the use of non-prescription medicines. This gradually led to the expansion of the OTC market in India.

Recent Innovations in the OTC Drug Sector (2025)

The OTC pharmaceutical industry has undergone remarkable transformation in recent years, particularly in 2025, driven by technological advancements and changing consumer preferences. Modern OTC products are designed to improve safety, efficacy, and user convenience.

One notable development is the incorporation of digital technologies, including QR-code-enabled packaging and mobile healthcare applications. These tools provide consumers with instant access to dosage instructions, safety information, and product details.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has also begun influencing the OTC market by assisting consumers in identifying suitable medication options based on reported symptoms and personal health information.

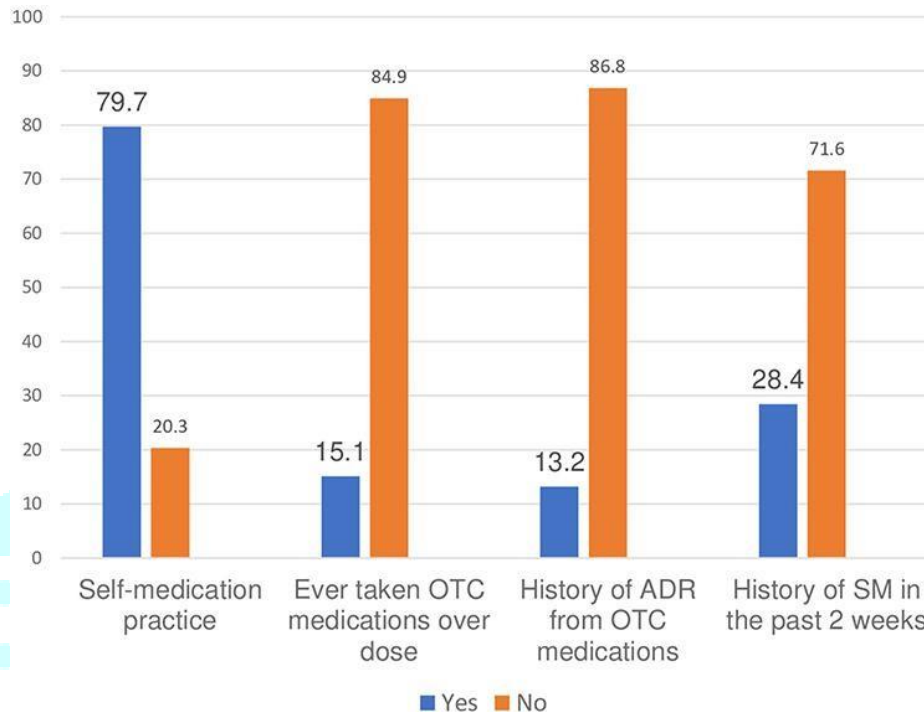
Methodology

Study Design: A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted to evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to the use of over-the-counter (OTC) medications among the study participants.

Study Population: The study included individuals aged 18 years and above from the selected study area

who voluntarily agreed to participate. Participants were chosen using a convenient sampling technique.

Sample Size: A total of ___ participants were enrolled in the study. The sample size was determined based on the availability and willingness of participants during the data collection period.



The above bar graph represents different aspects related to the use of Over-the-Counter (OTC) drugs and self-medication practices among patients. The chart compares the percentage of respondents who answered “Yes” and “No” for various parameters associated with OTC medicine use.

The graph shows that 79.7% of the respondents practiced self-medication, while only 20.3% did not. This indicates that self-medication is highly common among the population due to easy availability of OTC medicines, convenience, and quick relief from minor illnesses.

Regarding overdose of OTC medicines, only 15.1% of the respondents reported taking OTC medicines in excess dose, whereas 84.9% denied such practice. This suggests that most consumers use OTC drugs within the recommended dosage limits. Overall, the chart demonstrates that OTC drugs are widely used for self-care and minor health problems. However, improper usage, overdose, and lack of professional guidance may increase the risk of adverse drug reactions.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that the use of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines is common among people for treating minor illnesses such as fever, headache, cough, cold, and acidity. Easy availability and convenience are the major reasons for their frequent use. However, many individuals use these medicines without adequate knowledge about their proper dosage, side effects, or possible drug interactions. The study also found that while OTC medicines can support self-care and reduce the burden on healthcare services, their irrational use may result in unwanted health complications. Therefore, improving public awareness regarding the safe use of OTC medications is essential.

Pharmacists and healthcare professionals should actively educate consumers about responsible self-medication practices. Promoting accurate information and encouraging professional consultation when necessary can help ensure the safe and effective use of OTC medicines.

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