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An Overview of Community Pharmacist's Role on Over the Counter Medicine Misuse and Abuse

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Description

Over-the-counter (OTC) medicines are safe when used as directed, but there are risks of misuse and abuse. Misuse refers to taking OTC medicines for medical purposes but inappropriately, such as taking higher doses than recommended. Abuse refers to taking OTC medicines for non-medical purposes, such as recreational purposes. Community pharmacists can play a role in preventing and managing misuse and abuse of over-the-counter medications. Studies from different countries that met the inclusion criteria were found using searches in Scopus, EMBASE, MEDLINE, and PubMed for publications published between January 2016 and December 2023 [1].

Over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, sometimes referred to as nonprescription drugs, are available without a doctor's prescription. They are widely used to prevent and treat a number of illnesses, including the common cold, headaches, heartburn and musculoskeletal pain. Despite the advantages they offer patients, there are various risks associated with using them. These risks could include the patient not fully understanding the underlying illness, incorrect dosage, dependency or addiction, unpleasant responses, and drug-drug interactions. When taken as directed, over-the-counter (OTC) medications are generally safe, unlike prescription drugs; nonetheless, abuse and misuse are also possible. The term "misuse of medicines" describes the improper use of over-the-counter, such as taking higher doses than recommended. On the other hand, abuse describes the use of medications for goals other than medical ones, like recreational ones [2,3].

Community pharmacists can take proactive measures in preventing and managing misuse and abuse issues by utilizing their clinical skills, providing oral and written medicine information, and building trust with patients. This is because they are frequently the first point of contact for patients in need of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. Nevertheless, a number of obstacles must be overcome by pharmacists in order to recognize and address the problematic use of over-the-counter medications, including limited access to patient medication histories, which makes patient counseling difficult [4,5].

Conclusion

The main challenges and barriers that pharmacists identified were customer attitudes about easily obtaining medication from other pharmacies if one refuse, and the difficulty of changing customer perceptions about over-the-counter (OTC) medications. The majority of pharmacists expressed that public education and awareness campaigns are one potential strategy to minimize the risk of misuse and abuse. Considerable attention should be paid to the risks of future expansion of inappropriate self-medication.

References

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