

Assessment of Perceived Safety of Over-the-Counter Products for Special Populations

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Abstract

Introduction:

New medications and safety guidelines constantly change making it difficult for community pharmacists to keep up with the newest information.

Objective:

The objective of this study is to determine if additional resources are needed to keep community pharmacists up to date with over-the-counter (OTC) medication guidelines with a focus on the special populations of pregnant patients and children.

Methods:

The primary outcome measured in this study was mean score on a 10-question quiz compared to the perceived safety of the answers given. The secondary outcomes were percentage of responses and mean score on quiz versus years practiced, comfortability in recommending OTC products, frequency of recommending OTC products weekly, percentage of correct responses for cases in special populations, and barriers to comfortability in recommending OTC products.

Results:

Primary Outcome: The mean score on the quiz was $68\% \pm 16.7$, while the mean percentage of perceived safe recommendations was $55.7\% \pm 23.9$. The mean difference between these two measures was $20.2\% \pm 15.6$.

Secondary Outcomes: Demographics: Approximately 39.4% of responses came from those who had practiced 0-5 years, 20.2% have practiced 6-10 years, 23.1% have practiced 11-20 years, and 17.3 % have practiced more than 20 years. There was a 66.1% mean score in those who had been practicing 0-5 years, 69.5 % for 6-10 years, 69.6% for 11-20 years, and 68.9% for 20+ years. Approximately 64.7% of responders said they were comfortable recommending OTC products, 30.4% were somewhat comfortable, 3.9% were somewhat uncomfortable, and 0.1% were uncomfortable. Approximately 8.8% of pharmacists stated they recommend 0-1 OTC products weekly, 19.6% recommend 2-4 weekly, and 71.6% recommend 5+ weekly. Approximately 58.9% of the responses to cases pertaining to pregnancy were correct and 72.5% of the responses to cases pertaining to children were correct. The results for obstacles to comfortability were as follows: time- 16.6% of responses, level of knowledge-16.8%, rapidly changing guidelines 17.2%, level of confidence-13.8%, lack of pertinent patient information-19.7%, lack of distraction free recommendation area- 15.9%.

Conclusion:

To ensure the safety and best possible care of our most vulnerable patients, continuing education focusing on OTC products should be required and provided to community pharmacists.

Keywords: OTC, Over-the-counter, Safety, Pregnancy, Pharmacist