

Evaluation of Knowledge and Practices of Prescribers Regarding Rationality of Promotional Drug Literature Using WHO Criteria

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Background

Pharmaceutical Promotion refers to all the information and persuasive activities by manufacturers and distributors in order to induce the prescription, supply, purchase and/or use of medicinal drugs. There is evidence that drug utilization problems are increasingly encountered in many developing countries due to irrational drug advertisement, lack of knowledge and practice regarding WHO Ethical Criteria for medicinal drug promotion among prescribers and medical representatives.

Aims & Objectives

The study was aimed to evaluate collected drug promotional brochures for accuracy, consistency, and validity of the medicinal drug advertisements as well as knowledge and practice of prescribing physicians and medical representative about WHO Ethical Criteria for Medicinal Drug Promotion and about the existing regulations

Material and Methods

This observational and questionnaires based cross-sectional study was conducted in the department of pharmacology at Vardhman Mahavir Medical College and associated Safadarjang Hospital Delhi, India. One thousands advertisement were collected in 3 months from medical journals and from various OPDs and analyzed for fulfillment of "WHO criteria, 1988. The evaluation of knowledge and practices of physicians and medical representatives about WHO ethical criteria for medicinal drug promotion was done by a separate questionnaire containing 6 items with multiple options. The participants were provided 15 minutes to answer the

questionnaire.

Results

None of the promotional literature fulfilled all WHO criteria. Very few brochures mentioned about adjuvant (2%) and safety (15.8%). Only 40.7% were presented with content of active ingredient(s) per dosage form or regimen. Although 100% of brochures were containing brand name. The evaluation of knowledge and practices of physicians showed that although 100% of prescriber were aware about WHO Criteria for Medicinal Drug Promotion but only 31% evaluated the text in pharmaceutical advertisements. Few prescribers evaluated references (17%) and claims regarding pharmacokinetic properties (22%). The evaluation of knowledge and practices of medical representatives showed 100% of them have knowledge about WHO Criteria. Majority (92%) of medical representatives stressed on brand name and efficacy and very few (8.2%) explain about references. None of medical representatives talks about pictures and images of pharmaceutical advertisements.

Conclusions

The study showed that the compliance with the implementation WHO-EC in medicinal drug promotion/advertisement is very poor. Health-care professionals receive little or no instruction on how to assess pharmaceutical promotion and how to understand its often subtle influence on their prescribing behaviour. Medical representatives were lacking in sufficient medical and technical knowledge and integrity to present information on products and carry out other promotional activities in an accurate and responsible manner.