

A Study on Awareness & Perspective of Over-the-Counter (OTC) i.e. non prescribed drugs among consumer's in Pune city.

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Abstract

An Over-the-Counter drug doesn't require prescription to buy them; consumers don't need to consult their doctor to buy these drugs. There are many drugs we see in day to day life taking without doctors' consultation in our surrounding, like for headache, cold & cough, ointments etc. In all cases consumer doesn't ask or consult their doctor for such remedies. Consumer knows the medicine or he/she asks some other person for medicine and directly buys that drug from the chemist. There are many parameters one can considered while buying these drugs but whether consumers knows about these drugs, do they have proper knowledge about these drugs, what is the image of such kind of drugs into the minds of consumer, do they think about side effects of these drugs? The given study will assess the consumer's mind with respect to Over-the-Counter drugs. It has been observed that the awareness about Over-the-Counter drugs is very well in the consumers, but only in the sense of direct purchase/buying of these drugs. People are really not aware about the technical or theoretical difference between prescribed & non-prescribed drugs. They just blindly buy these drugs without considering their side effect on their health.

Key words : Awareness & Perspective, Over-the-Counter (OTC).

Introduction :

The Indian Pharmaceutical industry started in 1991 and then it goes from several phases with influential effect of Government. Today, Pharmaceutical industry is growing rapidly and ranking 2nd largest industry in India which obviously having a sound share in Indian economy as well.

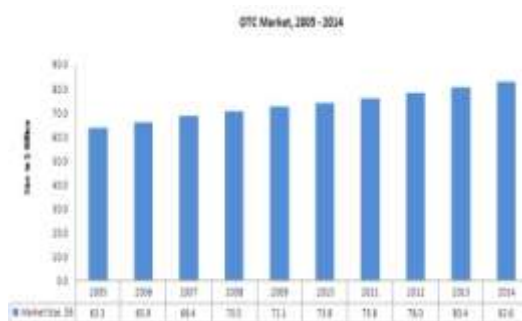
OTC pharmaceuticals are having a large share in the overall pharmaceutical market. India currently ranks eleventh in the global OTC market and it is estimated that it will reach ninth position within next five years.* Net scribes (India) Pvt. Ltd. June 8, 2012

OTC Drugs :

The phrase "OTC" has no legal recognition in India; all the drugs not included in the list of

“prescription-only drugs” are considered to be non-prescription drugs (or OTC drugs). Hence “OTC Drugs” means drugs legally allowed to be sold “Over the Counter” by pharmacists, i.e. without the prescription of a Registered Medical Practitioner.

Currently the Indian OTC market (including frank OTC medicines which are advertised and deemed OTC brands, and ones that are non-advertised or Rx marketed but with large OTC sales component) is estimated to represent approximately USD 1,813 million.



There are over 100 thousand different OTC drugs. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) classifies these drugs in different categories:

- 1) Rubs/ Balm - Moov, Iodex. over eighty
- 2) Analgesic/ Cold Tablet – D’cold, Stopache, Crocin, Disprin.
- 3) Digestives – Eno, Gelusil.
- 4) Medicated Skin Treatment - Itch Guard, Krack, Ringguard, Clearasil.
- 5) Cough Lozenges - Strepsils, Halls.
- 6) Vitamin/ Tonic/ Heath Supplements - Horlicks, Complan, Boost, Calcium Sandoz.
- 7) Antiseptic Cream/ Liquids - Borosoft, Boroplus, Dettol

Literature Review :

Cbib-Wen Sib et al., 2004, *Annals Family Medicines*, 2(3), 240-244, “Consumer Knowledge of Over-the-Counter Phenazopyridine” states that effective use of over-the-counter (OTC) medications depends on purchasers’ knowledge of their indications. The given study examines consumer knowledge regarding the urinary tract analgesic phenazopyridine, which recently became available without prescription. Result shows the many consumers possess poor knowledge about phenazopyridine, potentially leading to under treatment, especially in groups with worse access to care.

Michal Herzensteie et al., 2004, *Marketing Letters* 15:4, 201–212, “How Consumers’ Attitudes Toward Direct-to-Consumer Advertising of Prescription Drugs Influence Ad Effectiveness, and Consumer and Physician Behavior”. The given study were analyzed to explore consumers’

attitudes toward direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) of prescription drugs, and the relation between these attitudes and health related consumption behaviors. Study reports the favorableness of consumers' reactions to DTCA, and more importantly, demonstrate that consumers' attitudes toward DTCA are related to whether they search for more information about a drug that is advertised, and ask their physician about the drug. They have found that once consumers come to know about medicine from advertisement many of them buy that without consultation of physician & knowing other information about that medicine.

Gupta VK et al, 2012, Research Journal of Pharmaceutical, Biological and Chemical Sciences, 2014, Volume 3 Issue 2, "Assessment of Awareness and Attitudes towards Over-the-Counter (OTC) Drugs amongst Urban Population: A Questionnaire Based Study." The given study analyzed the awareness & knowledge about non-prescribed drugs among the urban population wherein researcher have found that consumers are deciding their medicines by themselves than in between opinions from doctors. Also they are not following the ethical & safe way for taking medicines.

Csilla Major & Zolta 'n Vincze, 2010, Family Practice 2010; 27:333–338, "Consumer habits and interests regarding non-prescription medications in Hungary." This survey discovered that the general public has a high level of awareness concerning the prospective mistreatment of over-the-counter medicines. Research had conclude that health care professionals should seek to understand and respect patients' choices to assure optimal care. Also pharmacists could be more pro-active in the management of inappropriate over-the-counter drug use.

Need for the study :

Over-the-Counter drugs are non-prescribed drugs. Consumers do not need to produce prescription from registered practitioner at the time of purchase of these drugs at the chemist shop.

In our day to day life we see that for many symptoms like headaches, body pain, cough, cold, skin treatments etc. consumer it with takes direct medicine without consultation from physician. But whether they are taking right medicine for their symptom is very important because of an adverse effect of medicine.

So having an idea about medicine on different symptom is not the important thing but having a proper information about that drug is very important. Looking to the side effects & adverse effects of OTC drugs, the given study will enlighten the area of awareness & knowledge in terms of technical & theoretical of consumers.

Study will explore the consumer's knowledge & perception about OTC drugs in their minds based on which conclusions can be made.

Scope & Limitation of study :

The given study will be focused on the consumers who are using OTC drugs. Researcher is trying to identify the consumers' attitude towards non-prescribed drugs. What they feel & how they perceive these drugs while using them? Whether they collect all the information about these drugs before buying them or they just buy them as there is no eye on them for choosing right medicine for right symptom at the time of purchase.

The study will be limited to geographical area in Pune city from which the respondents are selected.

Objectives of the study :

1. To study awareness about Over-the-Counter (OTC) i.e. no-prescribed drugs.
2. To understand differentiation of prescribed & non-prescribed (OTC) drugs in the minds of consumer.
3. To assess the knowledge of Over-the-Counter drugs.
4. To analyze viewpoint of consumers towards Over-the-Counter drugs.

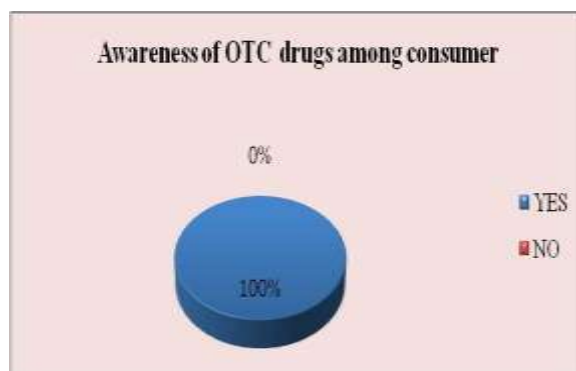
Research methodology :

In order to find out the awareness & knowledge about Over-the-Counter drugs among the consumers Descriptive study has been used for the given study. The study is based on the survey of the respondent i.e. consumers, for which 100 consumers has been selected by simple random sampling. The essential data has been gathered from primary & secondary source of data. Structured questionnaire has been used by researcher to collect primary data while secondary data collected from journals, magazines, articles & website.

Findings & suggestions :

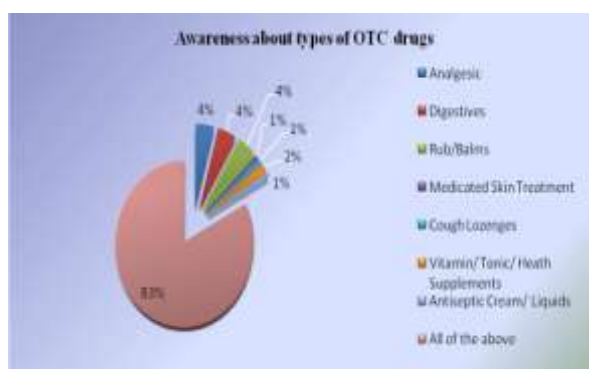
Looking to the general observation & in the given survey, it has been found that all surveyed respondents were aware about the Over-the-Counter i.e. non-prescribed drugs and also they all are users of these drugs.

Figure 1



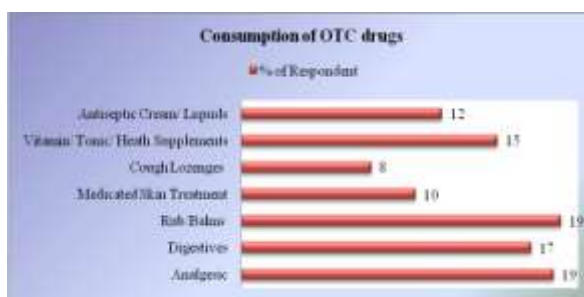
There are different types of OTC drugs based on their usage on different types of symptoms, which are very well known by the pull of respondents. In the given study more than 83% of respondents know different types of OTC drugs. Wherein 4% know about Analgesic, Digestives, Rub/Balms. & 2% know about Vitamins & 1% for others.

Figure 2



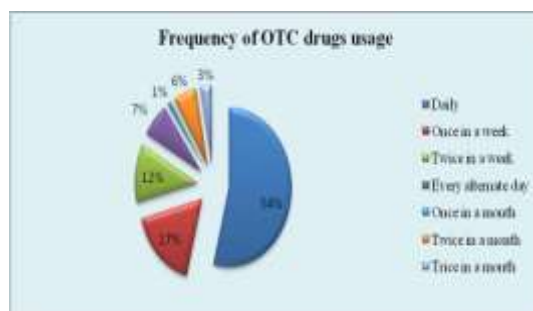
It has been observed that 19% consumers are using Analgesic & Rub/Balms as an OTC drug. It has been also seen that consumption of Digestives & Vitamins are also in good amount i.e. 17% & 15% resp. wherein Antiseptic creams, Medicated skin treatment & cough lozenges are used 12%, 10% & 8% by consumer's respectively lozenges are used 12%, 10% & 8% by consumer's respectively.

Figure 3



It has been observed that OTC drugs consumption pattern based on the survey it is seen that more than 50% consumers are consuming OTC drugs on daily basis. It has been also observed that frequency of consuming OTC products in a week is also more among the consumers. Wherein very few i.e. 1 to 6% consumers are consuming these drugs once or twice in a week.

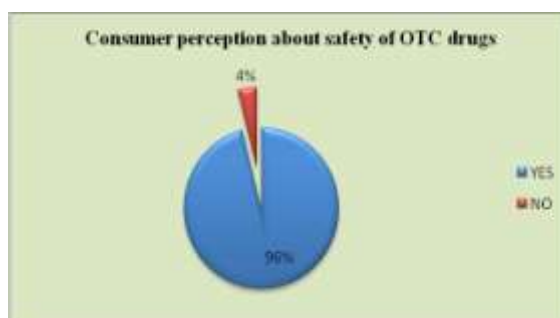
Figure 4



Survey indicates that the majority of respondents are getting information about OTC drugs from Advertisement. This is the major source from which consumers are aware about general information about OTC drugs & their effects. Few intermediates like Chemists also provide information to their consumers by asking medicines to different symptoms, i.e. on demand or so. Research states that more than 50% consumers are asking assistance from their chemist.

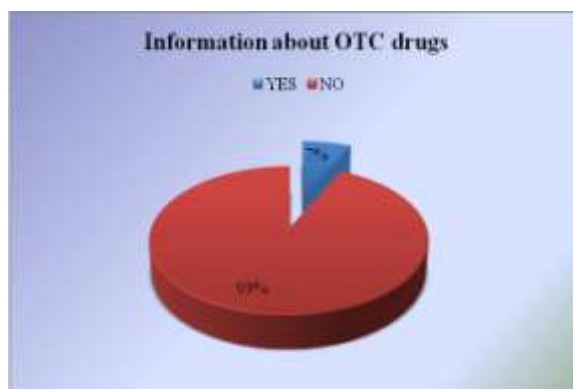
It has been remarkably observe that 96% consumers think that Over-the-Counter i.e. non-prescribed drugs are safe to use. While rest 4% does not think that OTC drugs are safe.

Figure 5



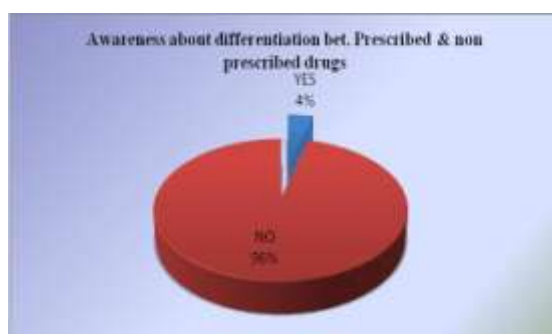
In the given study respondents were asked about detail information about OTC drugs to analyze the detail knowledge about these drugs to consumers. For which result shows that consumers are not much worried about the detail information about OTC drugs before purchasing it. This might be because of the trust on source of information or they really don't have any idea about the side effects of medicines. Still there is a pull of 7% consumers who look for detail information of OTC drugs before purchasing them.

Figure 6



To assess the actual knowledge about OTC drugs in the minds of consumers they were asked the difference between prescribed & non-prescribed drugs for which survey shows that consumers are don't know the difference between prescribed & non-prescribed drugs. Only 4% consumers are knows the difference while rest 96% are unaware about the same.

Figure 7



Consumers have different factors for differentiating prescribed & non-prescribed drugs in their minds. Major pull of consumers in differentiating OTC from prescribed drugs in is that OTC are available at every chemist shop. Also few think that OTC drugs cost very less amount, they are effective & react very fast. Few consumers also think that as OTC drugs can buy without prescription so i.e. the only differentiating factor between OTC & prescribed drugs. Result shows that there are 4% consumers who are saying that OTC drugs can be differentiate than prescribed drugs based on the FDA Drugs safety regulation, which is very true by law.

Figure 8

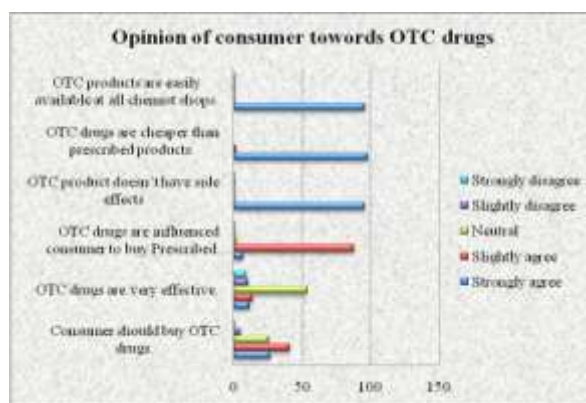


There are different perceptions about Over-the-Counter drugs has been observed by looking consumers opinions about OTC.

More than 95% consumers are thinking that OTC product doesn't have side effects, OTC drugs are cheaper than prescribed products & OTC products are easily available at all chemist shops.

Many consumers are saying that Consumer should buy OTC drugs. They also agree that OTC drugs are very effective. One fact consumeres are accepting in their opinion that OTC drugs are influenced consumer to buy Prescribed product without prescription.

Figure 9



*(Questionnaire based figure)

Conclusion :

With the help of findings of the study we can conclude that there is a need of educating consumers for Over-the-Counter drugs. They should give the theoretical as well as practical knowledge about these drugs as they don't know about the safety & side effects of OTC drugs. Also there is a pull of customers which are buying prescribed drugs as non-prescribed drugs. Different promotional tools such as TV advertisement and other plays an important role to reach to their target market. Role of intermediate is also countable in promotion of Over-the-Counter drugs. The given study shows that consumers are buying OTC drugs without considering their side effects. Also it has been seen that almost total population among the sample size using OTC drugs in their life, in which daily consumption of these drugs is more than 50%. The major finding of the given study is that consumers are using these OTC drugs but while using or before buying them they are not accumulating the information about those drugs which may have an adverse effect on consumer's health. So it has been seen that consumers are knows about OTC drugs but they don't know the technical or theoretical difference than the prescribed drugs, which in fact every consumer should know if they are consumer of OTC drugs.

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