Introduction

- Community pharmacies have a crucial role in optimizing the medication use process and promoting patient outcomes, preventing medication misuse, and reducing costs. 1,2
- Patient counseling is one of the most important services provided in community pharmacies.
- Many professional organizations published guidelines describing the content of counseling in community pharmacies. 3,4

Aims

This study aims to investigate dispensing and counseling practices of community pharmacies in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia.

Methods

The simulated patient (SP) method was used to measure how pharmacists currently provide patient counseling. There were four scenarios. Scenario 1 and 2 concerned with drug-dug interaction, scenario 3 concerned with proper time of administration, and scenario 4 concerned with side effects. Each pharmacy was visited twice with different scenarios. The simulated visits were conducted between April and May, 2012.

Scenario 1 SP enters the pharmacy and asks: “may I have Ferron?” If asked, the SP told the pharmacy staff that this was the first time to take the medicine and it is for her and she is 20 years old, and she has nausea and sometimes take antacid for stomach upset and she had not received any information from the doctor. If pharmacists provided no counseling, SP will ask the following: “May I take Moxal at any time? May I take Moxal before or after meal? Is there any side effects from this medicine? I should watch for?”

Scenario 2 SP enters the pharmacy and asks: “may I have Amoral?” If asked, the SP told the pharmacy staff that this was the first time to take the medicine and it is for her and she is 20 years old, and she has same thread and she is on birth control pills (Gynemcy) and she had not received any information from the doctor. Information provided to counseling, SP will ask the following: May I take Amoral at any time? May I take Amoral before or after meal? I am several inches to take both Amoral and Genera at the same time?

Scenario 3 SP enters the pharmacy and asks: “may I have Moxal?” If asked, the SP told the pharmacy staff that this was the first time to take the medicine and it is for her and she is 20 years old, and she has the same thread and she is on birth control pills (Gynemcy) and she had not received any information from the doctor. If pharmacists provided no counseling, SP will ask the following: May I take Moxal at any time? May I take Moxal before or after meal? Is there any side effects from this medicine? I should watch for?

Scenario 4 SP enters the pharmacy and asks: “may I have Zocor?” If asked, the SP told the pharmacy staff that this was the first time to take the medicine and it is for her and she is 20 years old, and she has same thread and she is on birth control pills (Gynemcy) and she had not received any information from the doctor. If pharmacists provided no counseling, SP will ask the following: May I take Zocor at any time? May I take Zocor before or after meal? Is there any side effects from this medicine? I should watch for?

Results

- There were 161 simulated visits. The results of these visits are illustrated in Table 1 and figures 1 and 2.
- There were 350 questioners distributed.
- Of respondents, 64% reported that they usually or always tell the patient about the purpose of medications, or diagnoses. 98% reported that they usually or always give patient information on how to use the medication and its application.
- Two hundred ninety nine (87%) said they are satisfied with their counseling practices.

Conclusion

The present study has highlighted the deficiencies in appropriate dispensing practices and medication counseling at community pharmacies in Saudi Arabia. Policy makers, stakeholders and researchers should design future interventions for improving the current dispensing practices at community pharmacies in the country.

Dispensing practice in Saudi community pharmacy

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