

ASSESSMENT OF POPULATION AWARENESS ABOUT USING THE LOCAL MEDICATIONS VERSUS THE BRAND MEDICATIONS IN SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT

Brand name medications dispensed when bioequivalent generic alternatives are available, resulting in an estimated \$8.8 billion in excess expenditures per year in the United States. The primary goal is to measure the awareness of community about using local medication versus brand medication. The secondary goal is to measure the frequency and the factors preferring one alternative. A web-based questionnaire designed to assess attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences with generic medications. The web-based questionnaire was distributed to communication web sites and different university web sites to reach the 608 patients. The assessment was performed for the most common six branded medications used in community pharmacies with related generic alternatives. We used data from a

large, nationally representative sample of outpatients to evaluate how frequently brand and generic name equivalents used in clinical practice. The 63% of the total patients preferred the brand medication, while 37% preferred the local medication and the reasons for their preference for the brand medication are 41% (n = 207). Those who prefer to choose the local medication had stated the four reasons, its low price 22% (n = 76) and thought that had the same efficacy of the original medication 25% (n = 87), and others did not know their reason for preferring 44% (n = 156), and other causes 9% (n = 32). Attitudes toward generic alternative related to prescribing behaviors, beliefs about and experience with generic alternative, and comfort with alternative.

KEYWORDS: Awareness, community, local and brand medication.

1. INTRODUCTION

Brand name medications are often dispensed when bioequivalent generic alternatives are available, resulting in an estimated \$8.8 billion in excess expenditures per year in the United States.^[1]

This potentially unnecessary use of brand name medications may reflect physician and patient beliefs that brand name medications are superior to their generic counterparts.^[2]

However, habitual use of brand name terminology may also play an important role in the dispensing of brand name products, as the name recorded on a prescription can affect whether a medication dispensed in brand or generic form even when the physician would accept the generic version, and the pharmacy is empowered to provide it.^[3, 4]

The data was from a large, nationally representative sample of outpatients to evaluate how frequently brand and generic name equivalents used in clinical practice. The use of brand rather than generic names for medications can increase health care costs. However, little known at a national level about how often physicians refer to medications using their brand or generic names.

The primary goal is to evaluate the awareness of community about using local medication versus the brand medication and the secondary goal is to measure the frequency and the factors preferring one alternative.

2. METHOD

A questionnaire designed to assess attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences with generic medications. The web-based questionnaire distributed to communication web sites and different university web sites to reach the 608 patients, which demonstrate the different regions of Saudi Arabia. The assessment performed for the most common six branded medications used in community pharmacies with their related generic alternatives.

3. RESULTS

We used data from a large, nationally representative sample of outpatients to evaluate how frequently brand and generic name equivalents used in clinical practice. The total patients are (608). The demographic data was shown in Table 1. The main source of the information about the choosing of the alternative medication is physician consultation 46% (n= 449),

followed by a valuable pharmacist consultation by 32% (n= 314) as shown in Fig.1. The patients' choice of the alternative medication are not influenced by advertisements 55% (n= 327), while 4% (n=26) others were influenced by a lot of advertisements and 41% (n=247) may be affected.

The 49 % (n=294) of patients were not looking for medications manufactured in KSA as shown in Fig. 2. The 63% (n= 387) of the total respondents prefer the brand medication, while 37% (n= 221) prefer the local medication. 41% (n = 207) thought that the brand medication was more effective, the 29% (n = 143) do not trust the local medication, the 23% (n = 115) did not know the reason for their preference for the brand medication, and the 7% (n = 35) had different reasons.

Those who prefer to choose the local medication had stated the four reasons, its low price 22% (n = 76) and thought that had the same efficacy of the original medication 25% (n = 87), and others did not know their reason for preferring 44% (n = 156), and other causes 9% (n = 32).

The importance of the medication price affects the buying of the alternative medication 45% (n = 265) and, while 27% (162) do not affect the price of the alternative medication, and 28% (n = 168) do not care about alternative medication prices.

The total number of the patients who are not looking for a low price alternative medication 51% (n = 302), but who are looking for a low price alternative medication, while 7% (n = 41) are looking for medications had a lower price, and 42% (n = 251) sometimes they are looking for alternatives to treat.

When the patients want to buy certain medication either local or brand medications, 77% (n = 457) search about their choices medication in different community pharmacies, while 19% (n = 113) asked about the alternative medication, the 4% (n = 22) they do not buy any medication if their choices medication is not available.

The comparison between patients preferring to use either the brand medication or local medication, which had the same effect and the same medical indications were shown in Fig. 3. As a result, the patients usually prefer to use the brand medications (Panadol, Brufen, Voltern and Augmentin) except two medications (Ciprobay and Claritine).

The 35% (n = 207) do not know that the alternative medication had same therapeutic indications, but under other trade name. They reasons of the preference for the original medication are thoughts about the brand medication is more effective, the patients trust the brand medications manufacturing, and the high quality of brand medications. The 27% (n = 163) prefer the brand medications due to their physician prescription, and 35% (n = 206) did not know the type of dispensed medication for them.

Regarding the role of pharmacist in this aspect, the 27% (n = 158) mentioned that the pharmacist prefer brand medication, and 12% (n = 74) mentioned they buy the generic alternative medication, and 28% (n = 164) do not ask the pharmacist about the alternative medication and they want the same prescribed medication. The 33% (n = 200) mentioned that the pharmacist did not give them any suggestion about the generic.

Table (1): Demographic Data.

Gender	Male (n=375, 63%) Female (n=222, 37%)
Age	
≤ 15 years	2%
16-20 years	16%
21-25 years	25%
26-30 years	12%
31-35 years	15%
36-40 years	9%
≥ 40 years	21%

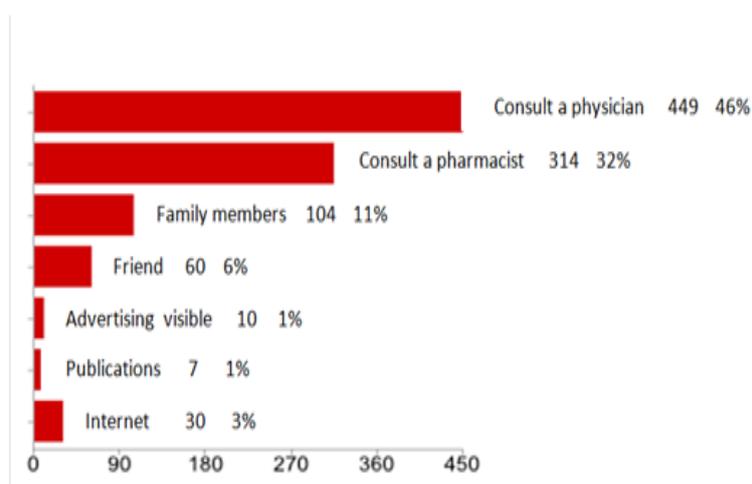


Figure 1: The sources of information for preferring either local or brand medications.

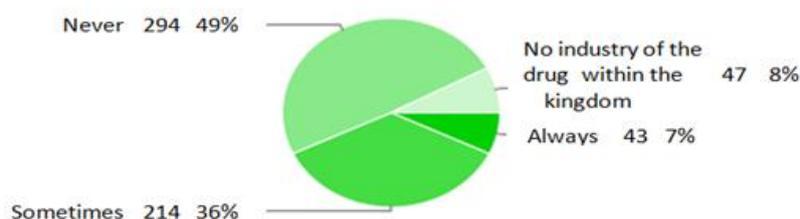


Figure 2: The participants asking about the generic medications in the community pharmacy.

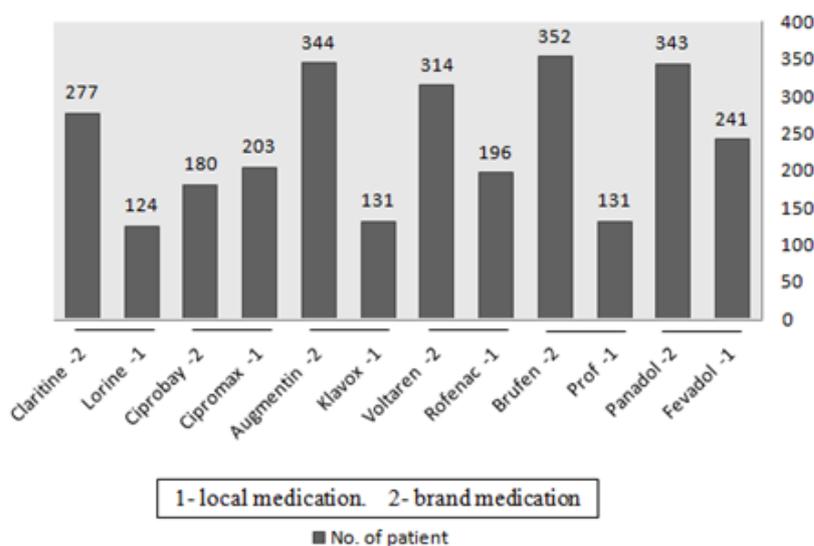


Figure 3: The population preference between the brand and local medications.

4. DISCUSSION

In this nationally representative survey, physicians prefer using the brand medications more than by generic medications. Brand names used almost exclusively for medications without generic competition at the time of the survey. Brand name using was common also even the generic competition is available but at lower rates with greater variability between medications. While to our knowledge, no previous studies have evaluated the use of medication terminology on a national scale.

That most people are buying the medication according to the physicians and pharmacist consultation. The patients were not affected by advertisements therefore; the physician and the pharmacist consultation have a large and important role in determining medication choice. Most people prefer the medication outside the kingdom, they are not looking for a medication manufactured in the KSA, and some of them did not know the existence of these

medication factories in the KSA. Strongly, the more patients in this survey interested about the price, it is very important in the purchasing the medication, however, also, they did not ask the pharmacist directly for any alternative have a lower price, and most of the patients search for the prescribed medication only in the different community pharmacies. Therefore, the role of the physician and the pharmacist to aware the patients about the alternative medications has a vital role in patient decision and to reduce the cost of purchasing the medication.

5. CONCLUSION

Attitudes toward generic alternative related to prescribing behaviors, beliefs about and experience with generic alternative, and comfort with alternative. Physicians need to understand the issues surrounding generic alternative and remain empowered to influence decisions to substitute.

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