

Knowledge and practice on generic medicine substitution and association of selected factors among private community pharmacists in the Jaffna district

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Introduction and Objectives: Generic medicines are used effectively in treating ailments globally. The generic medicine substitution contributed to a significant reduction in the expenditure of patients' medication. Private community pharmacists play an essential role in using generic medicines among patients. This study aimed to assess the knowledge and practice on generic medicine substitution and the association of selected socio-demographic and work-related factors on knowledge among private community pharmacists in the Jaffna district.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 67 pharmacists who were working in the private community pharmacies in the Jaffna district. A self-administered pretested and validated questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants. Knowledge level was categorized with predetermined cut off values as good, moderate and poor. The data was analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Chi-Square and Fisher's exact statistical tests were used to determine the association of factors. The level of significance was determined at *P*-value less than 0.05.

Results: Among 67 participants, 62 responded to this study, whereas the response rate was 92.5%. The mean age of the study participants was 44.27 years (SD = 12.288). More than half of the participants (*n* = 36, 58.1%) were male. Most of the participants (*n* = 24, 38.7%) had 6 to 10 years of experience. The majority of the participants (*n* = 27, 43.5%) had moderate knowledge, and 32.3% (*n* = 20) had poor knowledge. Only 24.2% (*n* = 15) of the pharmacists had good knowledge. Most pharmacists (95.2%, *n* = 59) dispensed generic substitutes for prescribed brands. Profits, promotion by marketing representatives, and manufacturing companies were the most common reasons for the selection of generic substitutes by pharmacists. Knowledge had statistically significant association with age (*P* = 0.019), participation in the workshops regarding generic medicine (*P* = 0.005), and work experience (*P* = 0.022). Attending workshops may be the reason for having good knowledge among pharmacists.

Conclusion: Only 24.2% of the participants had good knowledge. Community pharmacists' knowledge of generic substitution needs to be improved. Conducting regular workshops/seminars and continuous professional development programs could improve pharmacists' knowledge.

Keywords: Generic medicines, Private community pharmacists, Jaffna district, Knowledge, Practice.