



A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF ANY PARTICULAR PHARMACY BY THE PATIENTS.

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ABSTRACT

It was across sectional prospective observational study design. The study was conducted at and around five districts, by covering rural, urban areas using validated questionnaire. The patients were included from all the areas like, Government hospitals, Primary Health Centres, Private hospitals and as well as Community Pharmacies. The factors influencing the choice of any particular Pharmacy is extensively studied. A separate question was given and the factors were critically studied. There were eight important parameters based on which it was studied.

The location and accessibility to the pharmacy and opening hours were found to influence the patients very much. The availability good medicines and getting it in a competitive price were also found as a parameter to select a particular pharmacy by the patients. But the confidentiality and privacy of the prescriptions and appearance of the pharmacy were not at all a significant factor for the patients to select a particular pharmacy. The study concluded that the present pharmacy services are to be updated to practice modern concept of pharmaceutical care.

Key words: Comparative study, Pharmacist, Pharmacy, Pharmacy Service factors.

INTRODUCTION

The goal of a pharmacy practice is to help individuals and society make the best use of medications as well as other health care products and services¹. The international conference on primary health care's report highlights a few significant facets of healthcare. Distinct people from various nations have different meanings attached to the word "HEALTH." For far too many people, health simply refers to being free from illness or disease altogether. World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as total physical, mental, and social well-being, not just the absence of disease².

Medication knowledge evaluation measures a person's aptitude for comprehending the knowledge required for using drugs correctly. According to numerous studies, improper pharmaceutical use and a lack of awareness about medications lead to diminished efficacy and wasteful use. The capacity to deal with patients and other health-care professionals is evaluated using one's attitude. It contributes to raising practice standards and implementation³.

Through medication therapy management programme, pharmacists can actively evaluate patients' prescription regimens and intervene as necessary. Regardless of the setting in which they practice, pharmacists have many possibilities to identify and suggest treatments and risk factors and to improve patient compliance by educating both patients and other healthcare professionals⁴.

The goal of pharmacy practice is to offer drugs as well as other health care goods and services while guiding individuals and society in how to utilize them most effectively. A comprehensive pharmacy service includes participation in initiatives to protect the public's health and prevent disease. Through professional encounters, different healthcare experts in the area can better their understanding of one another and upgrade their professional skills⁵.

The Good Pharmacy Practice and Pharmaceutical Care quality standards are of significant significance to the healthcare system since patient satisfaction is a key factor in quality evaluation. Patients' choices, expectations, and the reality of care are reflected in how satisfied they are with pharmaceutical services. It is crucial to comprehend how unsatisfied people are with pharmaceutical services⁶. Community pharmacy oversee the therapeutic use of pharmaceuticals and other related pharmaceutical services, making them the most accessible sources of primary health care for the community. In order to draw customers and foster customer loyalty in the highly competitive pharmacy market, community pharmacies must create effective marketing plans based on up-to-date data on consumer behavior.⁷

Pharmacists can assist patients comply with prescription drug regimens by helping to streamline their regimens and by providing patients with information and education. The measuring of compliance is covered in this article along with suggestions for improvement.⁸ Patients were more inclined to choose a private hospital if they base their decision on the quality of the services provided. Public hospitals were preferred over private hospitals more often due to word-of-mouth.⁹ In decreasing order of importance, medicine supply, pharmacist attitudes, medication instruction, and service promptness are the service characteristics that most strongly influence patient satisfaction. In the meantime, it was shown that patient satisfaction was not significantly impacted by the pharmacy's location. Furthermore, it was shown that pharmacy performance was positively impacted by patient happiness.¹⁰

METHODOLOGY

It was a cross sectional prospective observational study design. The questionnaire was prepared and tested for their quality, language and content validity. Further, the questionnaire for the pharmacists has done the language validation by retranslation method. All the questionnaires are approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee, Pushpagiri College of Pharmacy. The study was conducted at and around 05 districts, by covering rural, urban areas. The pharmacists were included from all the areas like, Government hospitals, Primary Health Centres, Private hospitals and as well as Community Pharmacies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Demographic Characteristics.

1.1 Gender

The impact of Pharmaceutical Care was assessed by evaluating the responses of the patients. 869 patients participated in the study. Out of 869 patients, 469 (54%) were Female and 400 (46%) were Males (Table –1).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	469	53.97
Male	400	46.03
Total	869	100

Distribution of Respondents District Wise.		
Alappuzha	184	21.17
Kottayam	222	25.55
Kozhikode	163	18.76
Thrissur	158	18.18
Trivandrum	142	16.34
Total	869	100
Distribution of Patients according to Study Area.		
Community Pharmacy	551	63.41
Private Hospital	152	17.49
Primary Health Centre	166	19.10
Total	869	100

1.2 Distribution of Respondents District Wise.

The patients were randomly selected from those who visited Community Pharmacy, Private Hospital and Government Public Health Centres in various regions of Kerala. (Table- 1).

1.3 Distribution of Patients according to Study Area.

The patients were distributed according to study area. The study area included in the study was Community Pharmacy, Pharmacies attached to Private Hospital and Government Primary Health Centre (PHC).

Out of 869 patients participated, 551 (63.41 %) were getting medicines from Community Pharmacy as they were considered as the primary contact of majority of the patients. 152 (17.49%) of them were visited various private hospital pharmacies for their medication after they consult with the physicians in that hospital. 166 (19.10 %) were from Government Public Health Centre (Table – 1).

2. Factors influencing the Choice of any Particular Pharmacy

The factors influencing the choice of any particular pharmacy is extensively studied. A separate questionnaire was given and the factors were critically studied. There were eight important parameters based on which it was studied. The questionnaires were tabulated in Table-2.

Table-2. Questionnaire for Factors influencing the Choice of any Particular Pharmacy

Sl.No	Questions	Question Code
1	Close to their home or work place or shopping mall	PHCHOICE1
2	Convenient pharmacy opening hours	PHCHOICE2
3	Pharmacist knowledge and ability to answer any drug- or disease- related question	PHCHOICE3
4	Provision of a good range of products and services	PHCHOICE4
5	Good and competitive prices	PHCHOICE5
6	Confidentiality and privacy	PHCHOICE6
7	Friendliness of the pharmacy staff	PHCHOICE7
8	Attractive appearance of the pharmacy	PHCHOICE8

Table- 3. Responses for the factors influencing the choice of any Particular Pharmacy

Questions	Community Pharmacy	Private Hospital	PHC
PHCHOICE1	285	51.72	79
PHCHOICE2	282	51.18	74
PHCHOICE3	194	35.21	50
PHCHOICE4	211	38.29	45
PHCHOICE5	152	27.59	37
PHCHOICE6	30	5.44	5
PHCHOICE7	118	21.42	37
PHCHOICE8	7	1.27	2

The accessibility of the pharmacy is usually one of the major factors which determine the choice of the pharmacy by any patient. Among the 551 patients who purchased the drugs from community pharmacies, 285 (51.72%) has selected based on the accessibility of the pharmacy either close to their home or work place or mall where they visit frequently. In case of patients visiting private hospitals, almost same percentage of the patients (51.97%) selected the pharmacy for the same reason. 42.77% of the patients visiting PHC selected pharmacy for the easy accessibility of the pharmacy (Table- 3. and Figure -1).

Another factor which plays an important role is the working hours of the pharmacy. The opening hours must be convenient to the patients. About 50% of the patients in all the four categories selected based on the working hours which is convenient to them (Table- 3 and Figure -1).

Unlike ancient times, now patients ask the pharmacist not only about the drugs but also about the disease conditions and the action of the drugs against the particular disease. So the knowledge of the pharmacist on drug and disease is very much important. But generally, it is not a major factor to select a particular pharmacy for the purchase of drugs. In this study it can be seen that less than 50% of the patients only selected pharmacy based on the pharmacist knowledge and ability to answer any drug- or disease- related question (Table- 3 and Figure -1).

The availability is also a factor which is to be considered in selecting a particular pharmacy. But now a day's almost all pharmacies make sure that they have sufficient stock of almost all drugs which usually prescribed. Even otherwise they have very good accessibility to get it to the counter on demand. Moreover, some pharmacies make non available medicines home delivery. Therefore, it is not a serious factor as far as the patient is concerned. So, less than 50% of the patients only considered this as an important factor for selecting a particular pharmacy (Table-3 and Figure -1).

After the implementation of Drug Price Control Act, there is no much variations in the price of the medicines in various outlets. But the drugs are sold at maximum MRP in almost all community pharmacies and also in hospital pharmacies irrespective of ordinary hospital or medical college hospital. But good discounts were given by the pharmacies to attract the patients about 25% of the patients in all the categories consider the price as a parameter to select a particular pharmacy for the purchase of their drugs. (Table-.3. and Figure -1)

Once upon a time the prescriptions were considered as secret message between the pharmacist and the physicians. But, now a days it is very open and as the world is on electronics the computer print outs are made available to the patient. Moreover, all information related to the drugs and diseases are now available on the electronic media. Therefore, the secrecy once considered is not relevant now. This is well supported in this study. A very small fraction of the patients only consider the confidentiality and privacy of the prescriptions and drugs and also their disease conditions in selecting a particular pharmacy for drugs. (Table- 3 and Figure -1).

Purchase drugs from a known pharmacist is a factor but not too strong, for selecting a particular pharmacy. Known pharmacists support the patients in many ways like give good brand of the medicine, provide some discounts, make available of the required medicine and also provide them at their home free of costs. Nearly 25 % of the patients in all four categories of patients selected accept these factors for selecting a particular pharmacy (Table- 3. and Figure -1).

The appearance of the pharmacy was not at all a significant factor for the patients to select a particular pharmacy in all categories of patients who purchase their medicines from the pharmacy (Table- 3 and Figure -1).

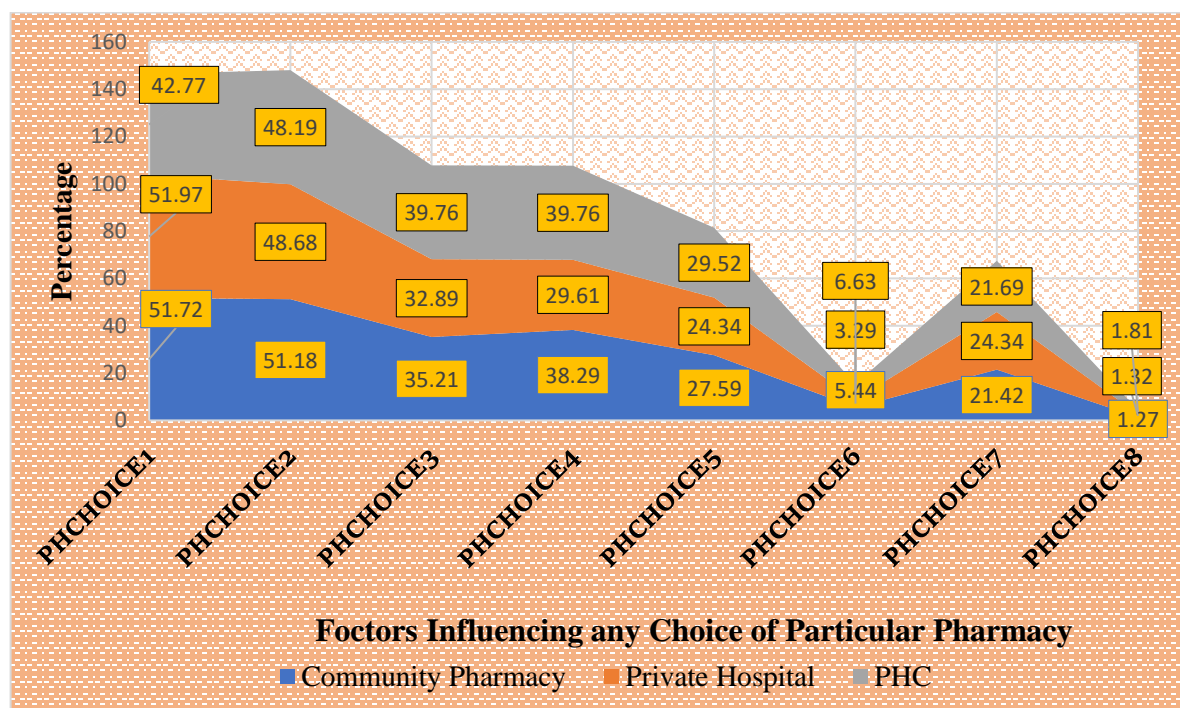


Figure-1. Responses for the Factors Influencing the Choice of any Particular Pharmacy.

CONCLUSION

The location and accessibility to the pharmacy is influenced by about 50% of the patients in community pharmacy as well as private hospital pharmacy. The response from others showed that they purchase medications from anywhere as per their convenience and availability.

The responses of the participants regarding opening hours were also showed a similar response.

About one third of the patients in all the work areas were influenced by the knowledge and ability to answer any drug related or disease related quires

A similar response was obtained for the availability good medicines and getting it in a competitive price.

Earlier, the prescriptions were considered a as secret message between the pharmacist and the physicians. But, now a days it is very open and as the world is on electronics the computer print outs are made available to the patient. Moreover, all information related to the drugs and diseases are now available on the electronic media. Therefore, the secrecy once considered is not relevant now. This is well supported in this study. A very small fraction of the patients only considered the confidentiality of the prescription as important thing and the privacy of the prescriptions and drugs and also their disease conditions in selecting a particular pharmacy for drugs . Purchase drugs from a known pharmacist is a factor but not too strong, for selecting a particular pharmacy. Known pharmacists support the patients in many ways like give good brand of the medicine, provide some discounts, make available of the required medicine and also provide them at their home free of costs.

The appearance of the pharmacy was not at all a significant factor for the patients to select a particular pharmacy in all three categories of patients who purchase their medicines from the pharmacy.

The study concluded that the present trend in pharmacy practice is not sufficient enough to provide better pharmaceutical care. Most of the healthcare services are benefited by good pharmacy practice. But, good facilities, working atmosphere, qualified and knowledgeable pharmacists with good attitudes and facilities to update on drugs and healthcare systems is mandatory to practice modern concept of pharmaceutical care.

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