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Physician perceptions and attitude about generic drugs in Albania

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Statement of the Problem: Pharmaceutical expenditures make up an increasing percentage of healthcare costs. One strategy in cost minimizing without compromising quality of medications is switching brand-name drugs to generics. Eventhough generics are comparable in terms of efficacy, safety and quality with their original drugs and can be used interchangeably, there are still concerns regarding their usage. Understanding physicians knowledge and attitude about generics may help ensure more cost-effective treatments. The market share of generic drugs in Albania is considerable. This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of physicians towards generic drug prescribing.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: Physicians from 18 primary healthcare centers in the district of Durres, Albania participated in the study conducted in January 2018. A paper-based questionnaire was used to assess their knowledge and attitude towards use of generic drugs. The study was approved by the Regional Directory of Health, Durres. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to examine the results.

Findings: 60% of 109 physicians that participated in the study declared to have very good knowledge of the term “generic drug”. The majority of them (70%) prescribed generics daily. However, no correlation between years of experience and frequency of prescribing generics was reported ($p>0.05$). Approximately, 42% of the physicians responded that the price difference between brand and generic drugs was one of the influential factors when deciding the right medication for treatment. Only 11% of the physicians reported generics as being less safe and effective compared to the original drugs.

Conclusion & Significance: Although it appeared that physicians are well informed about generic drugs, they still have concerns about their quality and safety. The results of this study highlight the need in suggesting the implementation of a national educational program about generics for physicians in order to overcome barriers towards generic prescribing.

Recent Publications

1. Čatić T, Avdagić L and Martinović I (2017) Knowledge and attitudes of physicians and pharmacists towards the use of generic medicines in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Med Glas (Zenica)* 14(1):25–32.
2. Toverud E L, Hartmann K and Håkonsen H (2015) A systematic review of physicians and pharmacists perspectives on generic drug use: what are the global challenges? *Appl Health Econ Health Policy* 13(1):35–45.
3. Sajhia O H, Ali A, Rezk L N and El Metwally A (2015) Perception and attitude of physicians toward local generic medicines in Saudi Arabia: A questionnaire-based study. *Saudi Pharm J*. 23(4):397–404.
4. Hassali M A, Wong Z Y, Alrasheedy A A, Saleem F, Mohamad Yahaya A H, et al. (2014) Perspectives of physicians practicing in low and middle income countries towards generic medicines: a narrative review. *Health Policy* 117(3):297–310.
5. Chua G N, Hassali M A, Shafie A A and Awaisu A (2010) A survey exploring knowledge and perceptions of general practitioners towards the use of generic medicines in the northern state of Malaysia. *Health Policy* 95(2–3):229–35.

Biography

Eriona Petro received her Master's Degree in Pharmacy (MPharm) from the University of Tirana, Albania. She worked for two years as a Community Pharmacist following her position as Sales and Application Manager for the representative office of Siemens Healthcare in Albania. She has been working as the Vice Technical Director of the Regional Directory of Health in the District of Durres since 2016 and has been a part-time Lecturer at “Aleksander Moisiu” University, Durres, Albania since 2012.

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