

Editorial Note on Alternative & Integrative Medicine - OTC Drugs

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Abstract

OTC medications are medications that have been discovered to be protected and fitting for utilization without the supervision of a human services proficient, for example, a doctor, and they can be bought by buyers without a medicine. Drugs that are safe and effective for use by the general public without a prescription are defined as over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. These drugs are often located on shelves in pharmacies with easy access by patients, but may also be located in non-pharmacy outlets, such as grocery stores, convenience marts and large discount retailers.

Keywords: OTC • Drugs

Introduction

Over-the-counter (OTC) drugs are medicines sold directly to a consumer without a requirement for a prescription from a healthcare professional, as opposed to prescription drugs, which may be supplied only to consumers possessing a valid prescription. In many countries, OTC drugs are selected by a regulatory agency to ensure that they contain ingredients that are safe and effective when used without a physician's care. OTC drugs are usually regulated according to their active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) rather than final products. By regulating APIs instead of specific drug formulations, governments allow manufacturers the freedom to formulate ingredients, or combinations of ingredients, into proprietary mixtures.

The term over-the-counter (OTC) refers to a medication that can be purchased without a medical prescription. In contrast, prescription drugs require a prescription from a doctor and should only be used by the prescribed individual. Some drugs may be legally classified as over-the-counter (i.e. no prescription is required), but may only be dispensed by a pharmacist after an assessment of the patient's needs or the provision of patient education. Regulations detailing the establishments where drugs may be sold, who is authorized to dispense them, and whether a prescription is required vary considerably from country to country.

Transitions between prescription and OTC

As a general rule, over-the-counter drugs have to be used primarily to treat a condition that does not require the direct supervision of a doctor and must be proven to be reasonably safe and well tolerated. [citation needed] OTC drugs are usually also required to have little or no abuse potential, although in some areas drugs such as codeine are available OTC (usually in strictly limited formulations or requiring paperwork or identification to be submitted during purchase).[citation needed]

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Over time, often 3–6 years, drugs that prove themselves safe and appropriate as prescription medicines may be switched from prescription to OTC.[citation needed] An example of this is diphenhydramine (Benadryl), an antihistamine which once required a prescription but now is available OTC nearly everywhere.[citation needed] More recent[when?] examples are cimetidine and loratadine in the United States, and ibuprofen in Australia.[citation needed].

It is somewhat unusual for an OTC drug to be withdrawn from the market as a result of safety concerns, rather than market forces, though it does happen occasionally. For example, phenylpropanolamine was removed from sale in the United States over concern regarding strokes in young women.[citation needed] A study has been done examining consumer's perceptions about the risk of and access to nonprescription medication. The study concluded that a small percentage of consumers prefer having access to medication over potential risks of taking non-prescribed medication. Ranitidine was withdrawn from multiple markets due to concerns over the carcinogen N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA).

In the United Kingdom, it was announced in February 2007 that Boots the Chemist would try over-the-counter sales of Viagra in stores in Manchester, England (previous available as prescription only). Men aged between 30 and 65 could buy four tablets after a consultation with a pharmacist.

Related Journals of OTC drugs

Alternative Health Care Journals, American Journal of Pharmacology and Toxicology, Annales de Toxicologie Analytique, Annual Review of , Pharmacology and Toxicology, Archives of Toxicology, Basic and Clinical Pharmacology and Toxicology, Cell Biology and Toxicology, Chemical Research in Toxicology.

