

Dispensing practice in Saudi community pharmacy

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Introduction

- Community pharmacists have a crucial role in optimizing the medication use process and promoting patient outcomes, preventing medication misuse, and reducing costs^{1,2}.
- Patient counseling is one of the most important services provided in community pharmacies.
- Many professional organizations published guidelines describing the content of counseling in community pharmacies³.

Aims

This study aims to investigate dispensing and counseling practices of community pharmacists in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia.

Methods

The simulated patient (SP) method was used to measure how pharmacists currently provide patient counseling. There were four scenarios. Scenario 1 and 2 concerned with drug-drug interaction, scenario 3 concerned with proper time of administration, and scenario 4 concerned with side effects. Each pharmacy was visited twice with different scenarios. The simulated visits were conducted between April and May, 2012.

Scenario 1 SP enters the pharmacy and asks: " may I have Ferose" If asked, the SP told the pharmacy staff that this was the first time to take the medicine and its is for her and she is 20 years old, and she has anemia and sometimes take antacid for stomach upset and she had not received any information from the doctor. If pharmacists provided no counselling, SP will asks the following:
-May I take Ferose at any time? May I take Ferose before or after meal?
-I am using antacids occasionally? Is it OK to take both antacid and Ferose at the same time?

Scenario 2 SP enters the pharmacy and asks: " may I have Amoxil". If asked, the SP told the pharmacy staff that this was the first time to take the medicine and its is for her and she is 20 years old, and she has sore throat and she is on birth control pills (Genera) and she had not received any information from the doctor. If pharmacists provided no counselling, SP will asks the following: May I take Amoxil at any time? May I take Amoxil before or after meal? I am on Genera? Is it OK to take both Amoxil and Genera at the same time?

Scenario 3 SP enters the pharmacy and asks: " may I have Moxal". If asked, the SP told the pharmacy staff that this was the first time to take the medicine and it is for her and she is 20 years old, and she has kidney failure and she had not received any information from the doctor. If pharmacists provided no counselling, SP will asks the following: May I take Moxal at any time? May I take Moxal before or after meal?

Scenario 4 SP enters the pharmacy and asks: " may I have Zocor"
If asked, the SP told the pharmacy staff that this was the first time to take the medicine and it is for her mother and she is 70 years old, and she has high cholesterol and she had not received any information from the doctor.
If pharmacists provided no counselling, SP will asks the following:
Is there any side effects from this medicine I should watch for?

References

1. Cochrane Database Syst Rev(7):CD000336.
2. *A Call to Action: Preventing U.S. Citizens From Inappropriate Medication Use. A White Paper on Medication Safety in the U.S. and the Role of Community Pharmacists.* Huntingdon Valley, PA: Institute for Safe Medication Practices; 2007
3. Res Social Adm Pharm 2009;5:197–210.

Results

- There were 161 simulated visits. The results of these visits are illustrated in Table 1 and figures 1 and 2.
- There were 350 questioners distributed.
- Of respondents, 64% reported that they usually or always tell the patient about the purpose of medications or diagnosis, 98% reported that they usually or always give patient information on how to use the medication and its application.
- Two hundred ninety nine (85%) said they are satisfied with their counseling practice.

	Total n=161	Scenario 1 n=49	Scenario 2 n=50	Scenario 3 n=20	Scenario 4 n=42
Counselling BEFORE demanding information					
Ask questions	15	1	1	0	13
Provide information	7	1	2	0	4
Counselling AFTER demanding information					
Ask questions	71	18	11	14	27
Provide information	131	37	44	20	30

Figure 1. Number and type of questions asked during the dispensing process

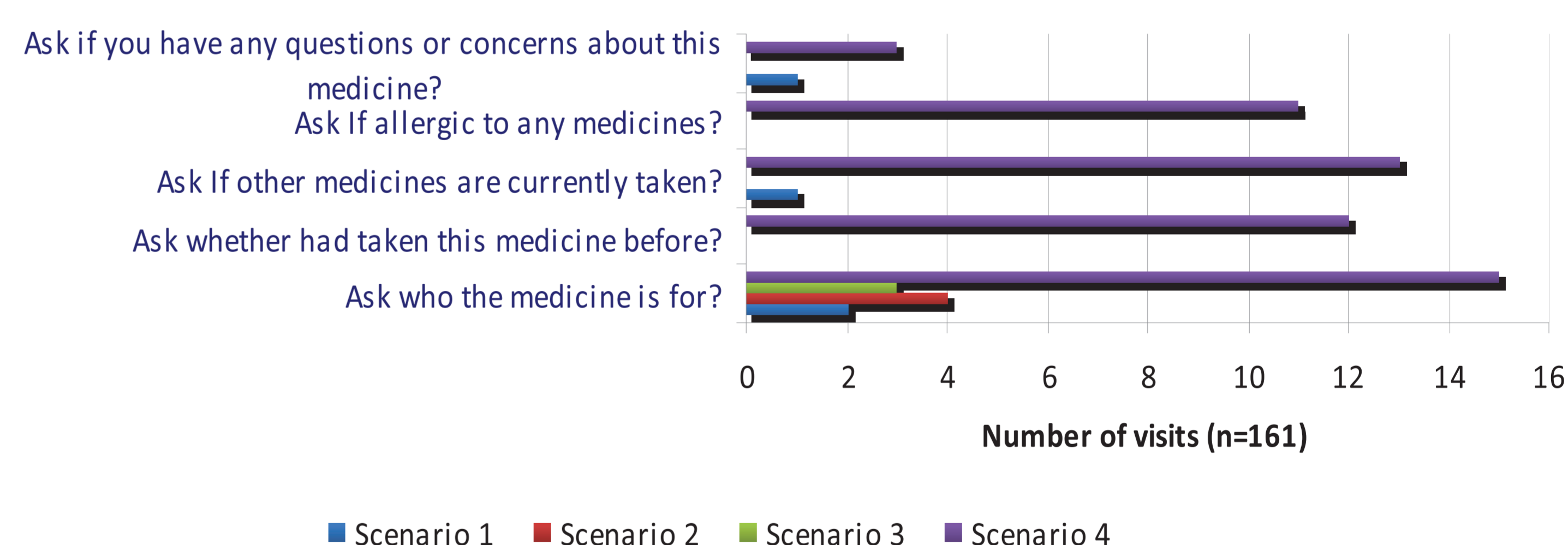
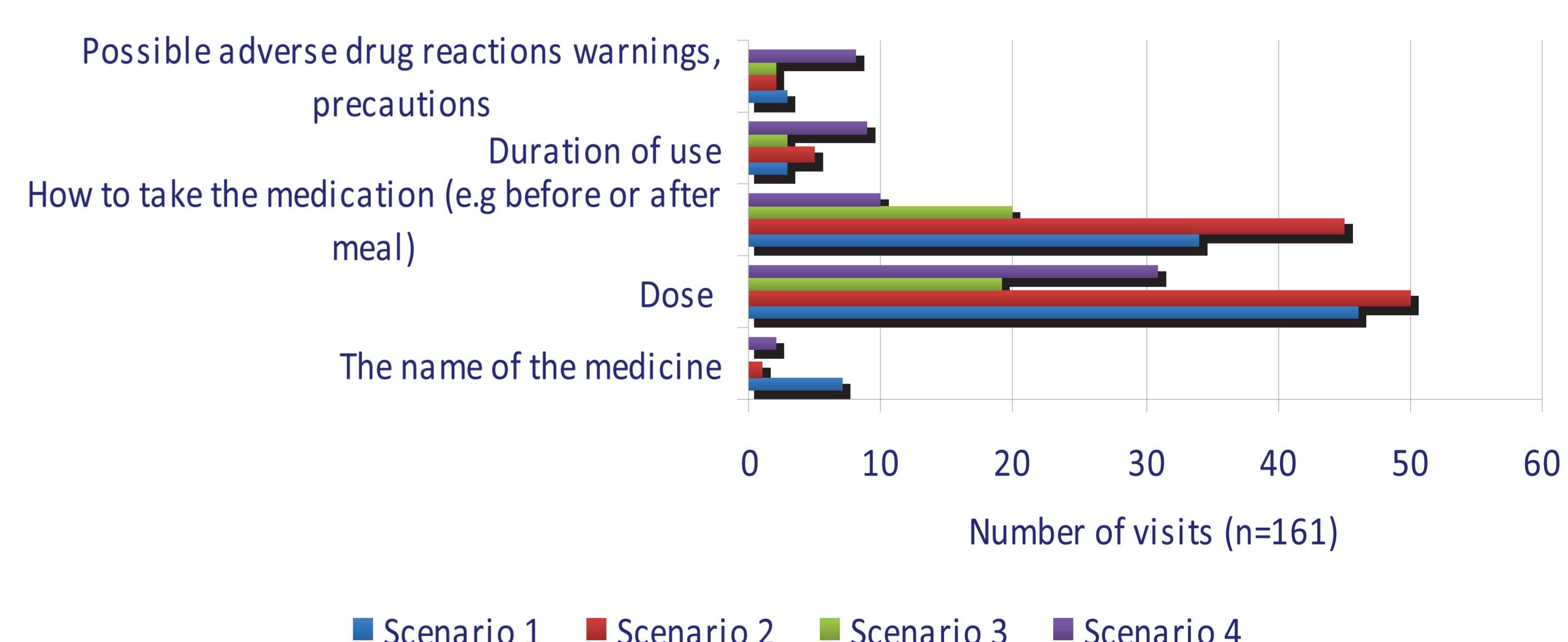


Figure 2. Number and type of information provided during the dispensing process



Conclusion

The present study has highlighted the deficiencies in appropriate dispensing practices and medication counseling at community pharmacies in Saudi Arabia. Policy makers, stakeholders and researchers should design future interventions for improving the current dispensing practices at community pharmacies in the country.