

# A Self-Limited Survey on Community Pharmacies in India, the Services Offered, Facilities available to Make Ease of Compliance for the Medication Prescribed and over the Counter Medication in View of Pharmacists

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## Abstract

Community pharmacists are the health professionals most accessible to the public. The current scenario of the dispensing pattern of community pharmacy setup study in India necessitates the importance of pharmacy as a profession and the role of the professional and for the betterment of the healthcare reform. The study on community pharmacies on their services offered, facilities available and the minor ailments which can be treated by over the counter medicines by a professional pharmacist can lead to betterment of the healthcare in the community which can help the early detection of many symptoms that may complicate the health of individual. Community Pharmacists play a crucial role in optimizing medication use and improving patient outcomes over their therapy, whilst preventing medication misuse and reducing errors. The profession expects pharmacists to ensure that they are competent in any area in which such advice is given to the public. The study gets a conclusion that most of the minor ailments are being treated in the community pharmacy itself, the result indicates that pharmacist should have a sound knowledge on the minor ailments and the condition needs immediate referrals to the concerned specialties of healthcare team.

**Keywords:** *Community Pharmacy, Pharmacist, Healthcare, Over the Counter (OTC)*

## INTRODUCTION

The recent years the pharmacy profession has recognized as important in terms of professional service. The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined health as the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity [1]. As awareness about there of a pharmacist in the public healthcare is being widely spread in recent period of time as a healthcare professional, community pharmacist can offer their role to betterment of the healthcare facilities, and increased outcome of the pharmacy graduates contributes to the community to give an image about the pharmacist role to utilize them as a care provider to the adherence of their medication regime [2].

The aim of the study to explore the perception of community pharmacists towards the enhanced pharmacy services in India according to the need of the patient by the study revealed. In order to demonstrate the requirements for pharmacists in India, it is necessary to undertake a pharmacy workforce study, to review pharmacy education programs, and to compare them with the roles that have been accepted internationally [3]. Pharmacists have promoted themselves as '*first port of call*' health professionals, available to the public without appointments, providing advisory and health care services. The rationale for their acting as 'gatekeepers' to primary health care rests on their ability to make a professional judgment regarding the appropriate action in response to patient's symptoms, including self-treatment or referral to other services [4]. A constructive pharmacist-patient relationship is essential to sound health care practice and the optimal well-being of the patient [5].

## AIM AND OBJECTIVE

Community pharmacists should equip themselves with appropriate knowledge and competencies in order to tender efficient and outstanding pharmaceutical health care [6]. Thus the study on pharmacist role to offer counselling and facilities provided as healthcare will certainly create awareness about the easy access and quickest and effortless solution to the public. In developing countries pharmacist role as a healthcare professional is not familiar to the public [7]. The objective of the study is to give a brief idea on community pharmacy services, professional advice by counselling the patients for the better adherence to medication regime and to avail better therapeutic outcomes. Facilities and services offered by qualified pharmacist to give high standard healthcare to the public, hence the study done for improving the current scenario to achieve satisfactory professionalism.

## METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire with options to choose their type of facilities distributed to 250 pharmacies and got 232 successful completed forms in and around south Indian city of Chennai. The questionnaire contains the section of information about the pharmacy, facilities available, the type of OTC medications dispensed, the services that can be offered by the community pharmacist to the public who is approaching for their medication requirements and counseling. The contents for the survey were targeted to collect the facilities available, available items other than the prescription medicines, the types of minor ailments that can be treated by pharmacists upon proper counseling and professional advice. The aim of the study was to necessitate professional service inside the community pharmacy as need of the hour [8]. A qualitative method of research is

being adopted for the study since it employs an inductive process and it allows new ideas and themes to develop in the future [9].

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Facilities available in the community pharmacy setup (Fig.1) in the pharmacies included in the study reveals the following in the defined chart below

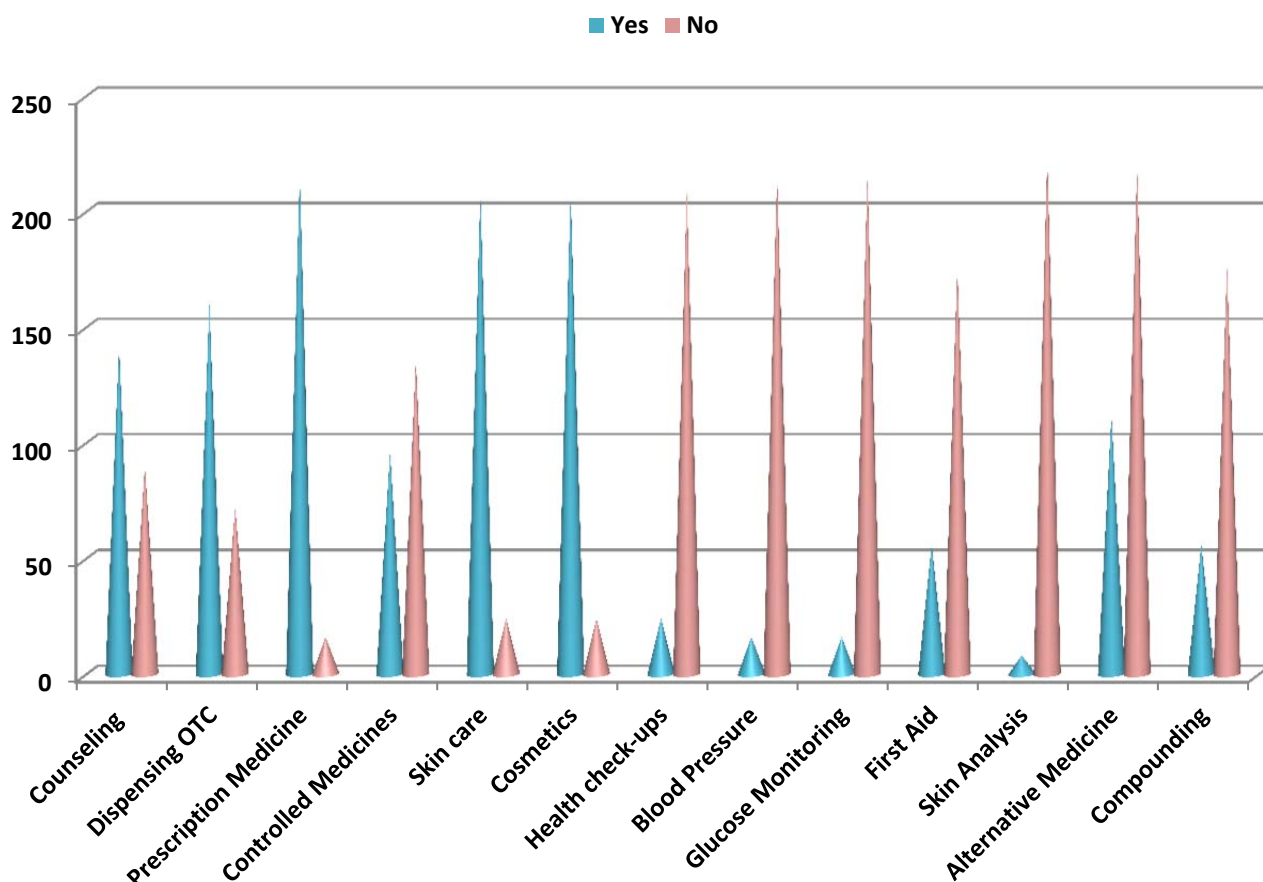


Figure1: Facilities available in the community pharmacies

The main function and facility offered being dispensing the prescription medicine by means of prescription (n=232) 93.85%. The skincare 89.66% and cosmetic products 89.74% are most sold in the pharmacies as their income-yielding source. The counseling of the patient for their medication, compliance to the therapy prescribed being falls to the next priority 63.08%. Health checkups such as checking the blood pressure, blood glucose level rarely performed in the community pharmacy setup. First aid to the consumers in case of emergency done at pharmacies according to the need and many among the pharmacist responding no to perform any first aid activities, mostly they are being referred to the nearest general practitioner. As in the developed countries the skin analysis with equipment to the visitors and customers as option not entertained in the Indian setup for their sale of skincare products and giving suggestions about their skin types and other results.

The varieties of items or the products sold in the community pharmacies (Fig.2) includes vitamins, medical

equipment, supports, baby care, oral care equipment, skincare, slimming aids (such as fat burners, appetite suppressants, meal replacement bars and nutrition juices) were among the popular in the store. The consumer visiting community pharmacy having an intention to buy any of the above said will look for professional advice from the qualified pharmacist to seek their opinion and follow the correct method to adhere to the instruction for their health concerns. When the pharmacies in the community being analyzed for those supporting therapy availability, medical equipment in the community pharmacy setup is low when compare to other prescribed and recommended product by the physician. The vitamins sales in the pharmacies are high but most of them are prescribed along with their prescription. The baby care products are the most sold irrespective of the location of the pharmacy as all the consumers by default prefer to buy from a pharmacy rather than the other provisional stores the study reveal.

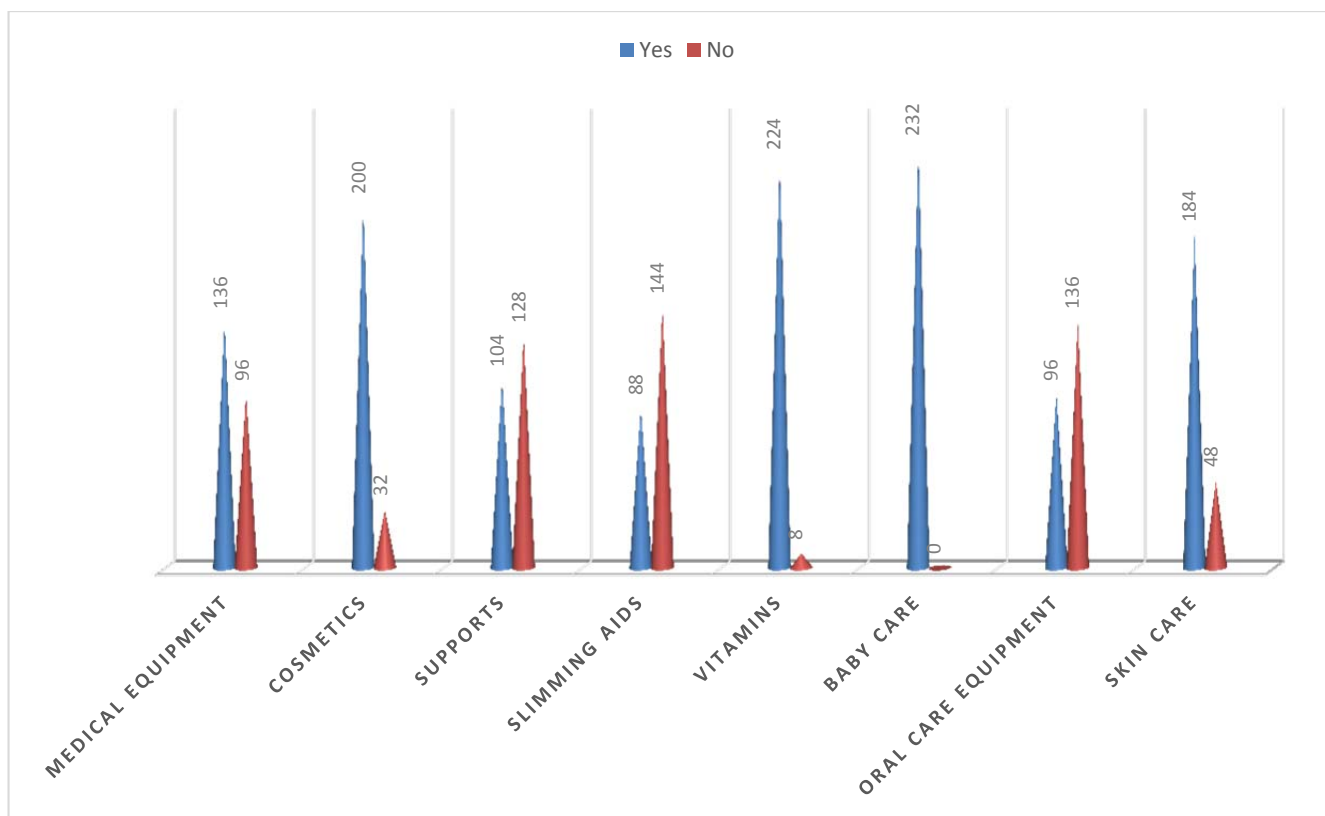


Figure 2: Varieties of healthcare available in the community pharmacies

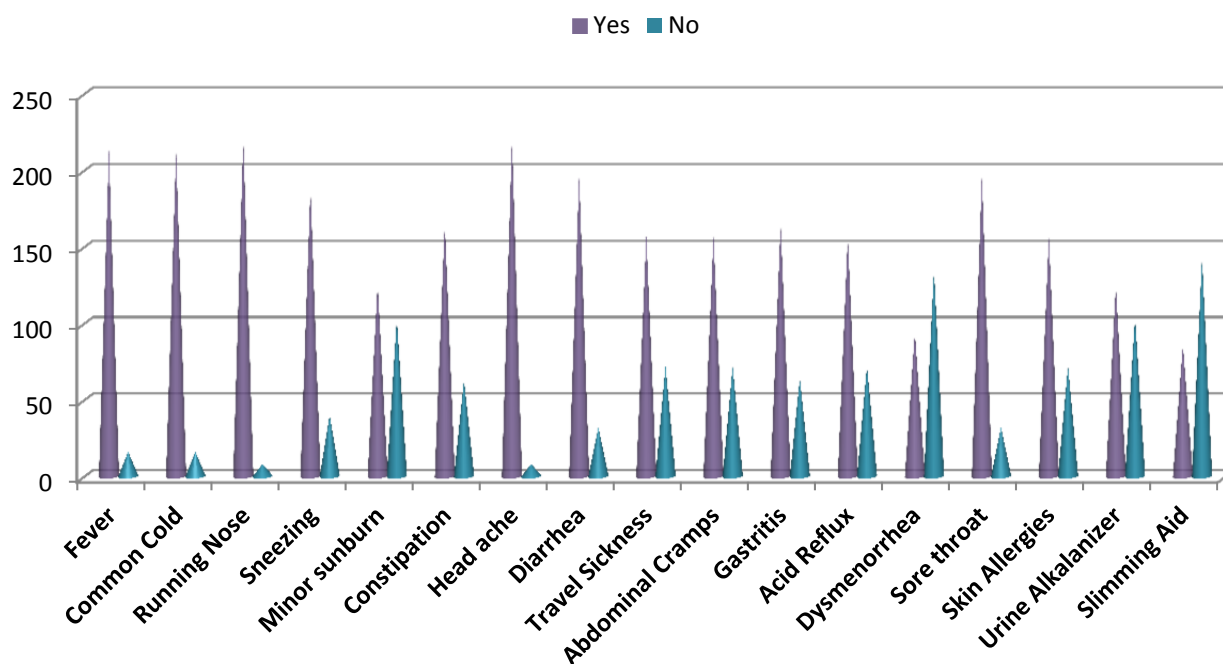


Figure 3: Types of minor ailments treated generally by the community pharmacies

The categories of minor ailments (Fig.3) being treated in the survey area includes fever, common cold, running nose, sneezing, minor sunburn, constipation, head ache, diarrhea, travel sickness, abdominal cramps, gastritis, acid reflux, dysmenorrhea, sore throat, skin allergies, burning sensation of urine, etc., were being in its acute conditions were

presented to the community pharmacists. The pharmacist make necessary counseling and direct those approaching patient to a General Practitioner according to the severity or if found minor which can be treated with the over the counter products (OTC). As the study result shows the female being treated for dysmenorrhea and slimming aid

recommendation more than 50% of the pharmacists refuse to treat apart from other minor ailments that was being treated by the OTC upon advice seek from a pharmacist. More than 185 (n=232) 79.74% response from pharmacist in the community pharmacy common cold, fever, running nose, sneezing, headache and sore throat were being treated in the community pharmacy itself. Responding to symptoms has always been an integral part of the pharmacist's role. The overall aim of responding to symptoms is to make a clear distinction between a minor illness and a more serious condition that needs to be referred.

#### CONCLUSION

The community pharmacies can undertake many initiatives within their objectives by increasing the awareness and involvement as the pharmacists are experts in pharmaceutical care, health promotion and act as gateway to the healthcare system, disease prevention and chronic disease management. As most of the minor ailments are being presented to evaluate the condition may need immediate medical attention in the community pharmacy, the pharmacist as a professional being a frontline of healthcare provider, can judge in right time to refer and provide a healthy environment to prevent further complications. Confidence in the quality of the counseling and the interaction will depend on the pharmacist taking sufficient time to gain important information before offering advice. A rushed consultation where the pharmacist appears distracted or gives the impression that they have been interrupted will not put a patient at their

ease. The patient must be allowed to state their case clearly and be able to engage fully in interaction. The quality of interaction can sometimes be influenced by the first impressions that are made. The public is entitled to expect that medicines purchased over the counter will be safe, effective and appropriate for the condition to be treated. The profession expects pharmacists to ensure that they are competent in any area in which such advice is given to the public.

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