

A Survey Evaluating Consumers Knowledge, Perception, Awareness and Preparedness about Generic Medicines in Urban Central Gujarat Region

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ABSTRACT

The questionnaire based survey study was conducted to understand the perception about the generic medicines in consumer's mind of urban Madhya Gujarat region precisely Vadodara, Dahod and Godhra. It was a questionnaire based survey intended to understand exactly what consumers' think about generic medicines i.e. quality, awareness and preparedness etc. The results of the study show that the consumers were not so clear and confident about these aspects regarding generic medicines but nearly all were facing the issue of costly medicines. When asked about the government's latest initiatives like Jan Aushadhi Kendra and Din Dayal Upadhyay pharmacy many were aware about it. Many consumers had heard or read about such stores on TV, Radio and newspapers. Most were happy with such efforts of government and were interested in availing benefits of cheaper medicines. Many were unclear about availing such benefit due to their previous experience which points at the ongoing situation where doctors prescribe medicines which are only available in store in doctor's hospital premises or nearby medical store. It was the prime concern and not the quality and efficacy of generic medicines. It was found that consumers were very aware about cosmetics. Something must be done to make the consumers' more aware and doctors more encouraged about generic medicines. Most of the consumers echoed in one voice that more such stores and efforts are needed.

Keywords : Questionnaire, Generic Medicines, Consumers, Vadodara, Godhra, Dahod

I. INTRODUCTION

After the expiry of original patent of medicines manufacturers other than original innovator company can manufacture them. There is a lot of cost saving in case of these medicines which are termed as generic medicines. As the amount of money for discovery of new molecule and other research aspects can be saved generic medicines are far cheaper than their branded versions. WHO defines it his way, to mean a pharmaceutical product that is usually intended to be interchangeable with an innovator product, is manufactured without a license from the innovator company and is marketed after the expiry date of the patent or other exclusive rights [1]. US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) define a generic drug as: 'A drug product that is comparable to a brand/reference listed drug product in dosage form, strength, route of administration, quality and performance characteristics,

and intended use'[2]. European Medicines Agency (EMA) defines it like this: 'A generic medicine is a medicine that is developed to be the same as a medicine that has already been authorized (the 'reference medicine'). A generic medicine contains the same active substance/substances as the reference medicine, and it is used at the same dose/doses to treat the same disease/diseases as the reference medicine [3]. However, the name of the medicine, its appearance (i.e. colour or shape) and its packaging can be different from those of the reference medicine'. Apart from these three agencies of the world nearly all agree on the general requirements that the product is off-patent, contains an active ingredient in a previously approved medicine, is shown to be bioequivalent to that previously approved medicine, and has the same dosage form, route of administration and treatment characteristics. Utilization of generic medicines is encouraged globally to combat the ever increasing healthcare expenses as their use can

lead to considerable savings because generic medicines can be priced as way low as pre-patent prices[4,5]. In the age of global melt down governments around the world focusing potential economic benefits make policy to boost the usage of generic medicines [6,7,8]. India is not an exception. In case of India the problem of higher healthcare expense is the major one. Poor government healthcare infrastructure, huge population and low spending on health budget has lead India to top the list where the out of pocket expenditure on health remains the highest. Ironically India exports generic medicines of about 50000 crores to countries where provisions have been made to make full use of generic medicines to decrease the burden of healthcare expenses on public and save a big pie from health budget. Indian has also realized this fact and working in this direction. The stake holders like pharmaceutical companies and doctors are not seemed to be happy with such views of government. While many countries have introduced substitution of prescribed branded medications with less expensive generic equivalents, as well as other measures to increase the prescribing and dispensing of generic medicines, it has been reported that negative opinions held about generic medicines (that generics are less effective and/or of poorer quality than branded medicines) by professionals and non-professional have the potential to reduce acceptance of generics in healthcare provision. Medicines play an important role in health protection and enhance the quality of life. Around one third of the world's population encounters difficulties in accessing medications reason being higher prices of medicines. In India's case nearly 70% population is far from access to essential medicines. Generic drugs are widely being used as alternative to reference drugs in many countries all over the world. One of the objectives of this report is to collate the views of consumer fraternity.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A postal survey based study in USA by Shrank WH et al revealed that patients agreed that generics were less expensive and better value than brand name drugs, and were just as safe. Findings also indicated that perceptions about generic essential medications have improved over time. Efforts to educate patients could positively influence usage of generics [9].

A postal survey based study in Australia by Ngo SN et al revealed that considerable concern was found among

patients with epilepsy about generic substitution of antiepileptic drugs. More clinical data and research on bioequivalence of generic antiepileptic medicines might help to address such concerns [10].

An interview based study in Ireland by Dunne Variable knowledge about generic medicines among patients. Although patients were supportive of their more widespread use, concerns regarding safety, clinical effectiveness and manufacturing quality of generic medicines were identified [11].

A postal survey in Finland by Heikkila et al revealed that Finnish consumers considered generic substitution a good reform & also had confidence in the effect of cheaper medicines. Savings were the main reason for accepting generic substitution. Substitution was not considered to cause any risk to drug safety. Two main reasons for substituting were a desire to save money and recommendation by pharmacists. Female gender, older age and use of prescription drugs were associated with refusing [12].

III. METHODS AND MATERIAL

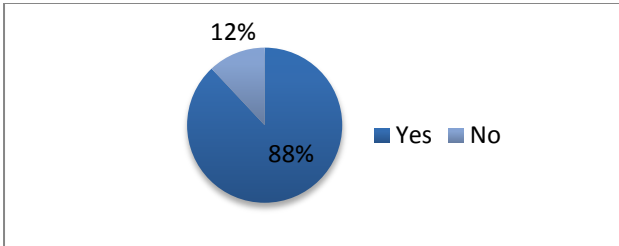
It was a questionnaire based exploratory investigation. Responses were collected from 300 consumers of urban madhya gujarat region (namely 3 cities Vadodara, Godhra and Dahod) by convenience sampling.

A questionnaire to get the detailed idea about awareness, knowledge, approach and opinions of consumers was developed under the guidance of respected technical supervisor. Consumers were selected for the survey through convenience sampling method

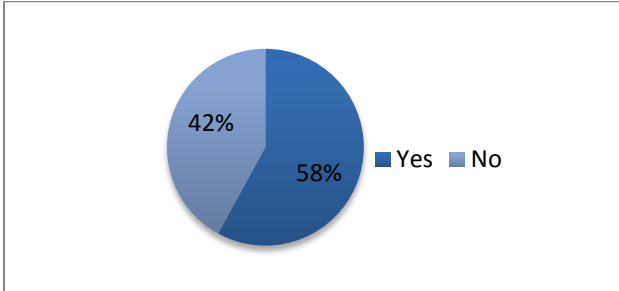
The questionnaire consisted of 12 open ended questions which were to investigate consumer's knowledge, approach, awareness, concerns and opinions regarding generic medicines prescription. The questionnaire was designed in a way that the survey takes as less time as possible in order to save valuable time of the practitioner and to achieve higher response rate. It was estimated that it hardly took 5 minutes to fill the questionnaire completely. Frequency analysis was carried out thereafter to understand the trend.

The below portion depicts the analysis:

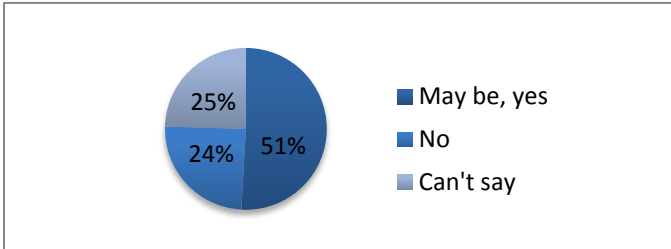
Q.1 Do higher prices of medicines bother you?



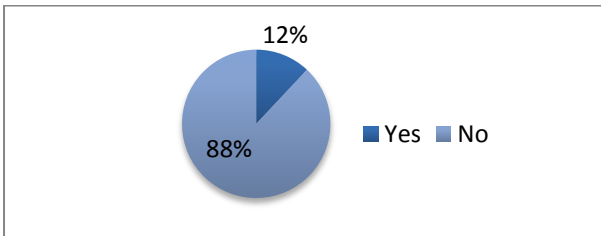
Q.2 Have you heard about generic medicines?



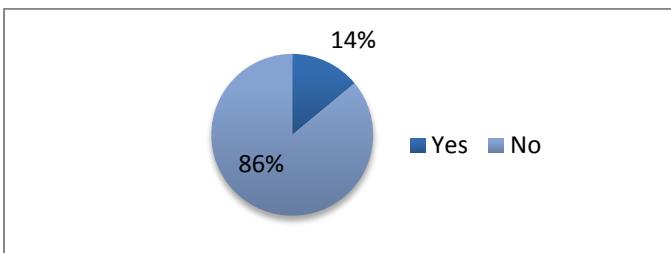
Q.3 Do you believe generic medicines are poor on quality



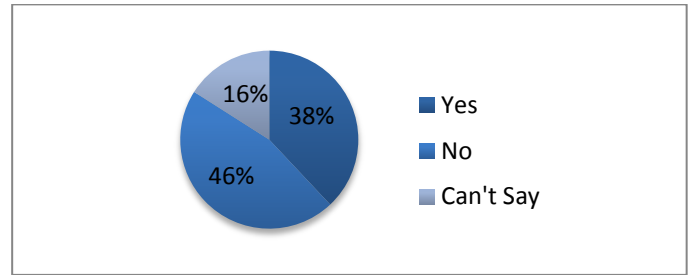
Q.4 Have you ever asked your doctor to prescribe generic medicines?



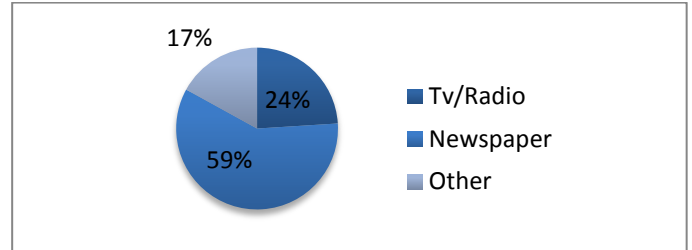
Q. 5 Does your doctor ever asked you about your financial condition?



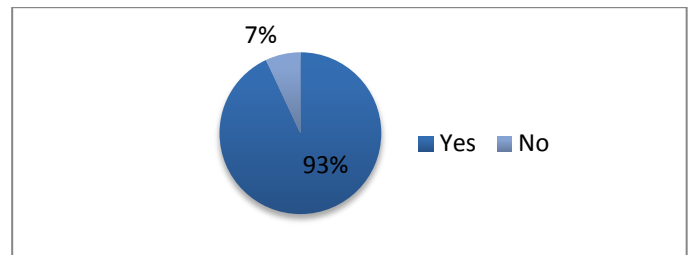
Q.6 Have you heard about Generic stores like Pradhanmantri Jan Aushadhi and Din Dayal Upadhyay generic store?



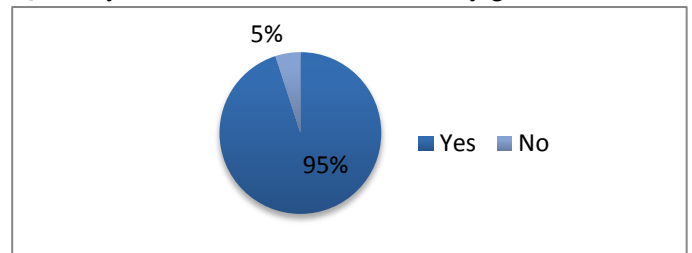
Q. 7 what is the source of you knowledge? TV, FM/Radio, Newspaper or Other



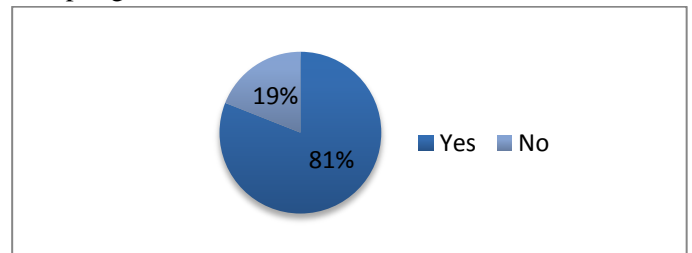
Q.8 Have you ever visited or wish to visit for price benefit?



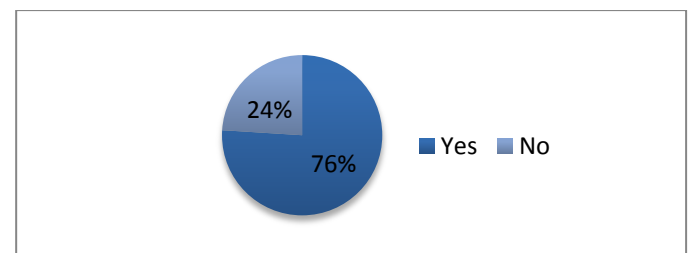
Q.9 Do you welcome such initiatives by govt?



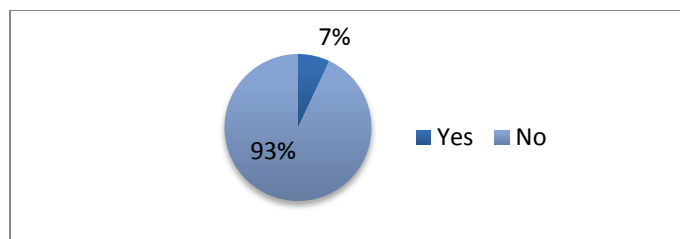
Q.10 Do you believe doctors should only prescribe cheaper generic medicines



Q.11 Do you compare prices of cosmetics before buying?



Q.12 Are you medically insured?



IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the survey throw light on many aspects regarding perception about generic medicines among the consumers of urban Madhya Gujarat region. When asked about higher prices of medicine 88 percent said it is a big problem for them. Majority were paying medical expenses from their pocket as this survey revealed only 7 percent were medically insured. As these days prices of medicines cost almost 50-70 percent of total medical expense people are spending a larger chunk of money on medicines. Many had heard about generic medicines (58%) and nearly all were sure about the quality of medicines as they said government is promoting generic medicines.

Electronic media which includes tv/radio/mobile and especially social media are the most effective tools to spread awareness. The above survey too reveals the same fact. Majority were never asked about their financial capability to afford the medicines by the practitioners or nor did many talk to their doctor about the prices of medicines. When asked about cosmetic product due to no restrictions on advertisement and promotion consumers were found to be more knowledgeable. Majority were choosing the cosmetic products after comparing their prices. People were very hopeful and thankful of such efforts by government and were willing to avail benefit of quality medicines at cheap price.

V. CONCLUSION

The survey reveals that the awareness, knowledge and demand are increasing among the urban consumers. The very efforts by government to promote the generic medicines prescriptions are being welcomed by the consumer fraternity, doctor fraternity is reluctant though! Generic medicines prescription is the most effective tool to decrease the out-of-pocket

expenditure. It was observed that many such efforts are urgently needed. Perception for generic medicines is changing on positive side gradually. It was felt that the government's efforts are in right direction but more such efforts are the need of the hour. Doctors' prescription with generic names only can break the corrupt nexus between doctor-pharma and will open doors for consumers to avail the benefits of cheaper medicines. The scope of OTC and cosmetic segment has growing like anything these days and no any legal restriction of promotion and advertisement like for other prescription drugs or medicinal products has made the consumer more able about these products. The promotion and advertising restriction has created a unethical pharma-medico nexus where consumer has no role to play other than paying off hefty prices which may be useful for luxurious foreign trips or expensive gadgets for doctors and huge profit for pharma companies. Something must be done to make the consumer more aware and able. Reforms in the law or proactive efforts by government can really make the difference in days to come.

VI. REFERENCES

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