

Current Opinions and Recommendations of Healthcare Professionals Regarding local production and bioequivalence study of generic medicines in Saudi Arabia: A cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The health practitioners, including doctors and pharmacists, have vital role by preferring to dispense brand drugs and not relying heavily on generic drug, and one reason for this problem may be the lack of knowledge of health practitioners about bioequivalence (BE) study. This study aimed to assess the degree to which medical professionals impose and favour brand-name drugs over generic drugs, as well as the anticipated causes behind this behaviour and measure their knowledge about BE study.

Material and Methods: A multicentre cross-sectional study design, and data were collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire. The study participants were selected from random hospitals, community pharmacy, pharmaceutical industries and research centres around Saudi Arabia.

Results: An online questionnaire was distributed to health practitioners in Saudi Arabia, where 259 participants agreed to participate, while 8 were refused. The percentage of participants who were between the ages of 30-39 was about 39%, 75% of them were males. We asked them whether they know about generic drugs or not, and found that 89% of them answered yes, and 38% of participants do not have a specific preference in dispensing medications, whether brand or generic drugs, while 37% prefer to dispense generic medicines more than brand because they think that it has better quality and more availability. When we asked them about their knowledge about BE study, 64% of them answered yes, and 61% of them believed that there are advantages in conducting BE locally, but 51% of them were not sure whether there is a BE centre in Saudi Arabia or not.

Conclusion: The study's findings demonstrate a generally positive attitude among healthcare practitioners towards locally manufactured medicines. Healthcare professionals recognize that high-quality generic medicines are affordable and have potential to yield significant cost savings. Dispensing of generic medicines is an opportunity to reduce the financial on patients as well as the national expenditure on the pharmaceutical sector, and based on the participants' feedback, it is recommended to increase the establishment of BE centres in Saudi Arabia to ensure higher quality and greater accessibility.

Key words: Drug, generic medication, brand medication, bioequivalence, health professionals

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