

Over-the-counter drugs, prescription and herbal drugs

Sociology



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Over-the-Counter Drugs, Prescription, and Herbal Drugs Over-the-Counter Drugs, Prescription, and Herbal Drugs Herbal drugs are plant extracts used as preventive and curative medicine. This branch of medicine makes up part of alternative medicine that involves the use of non-conventional methods in preventive and curative medicine. Early in the 19th century before widespread use of chemical analysis, there was widespread use of herbal drugs. After the advent of chemical analysis, scientists identified the active components in these drugs. Using their results, they prepared laboratory analogs, and this started the decline of herbal medicine (University of Maryland Medical Center, UMMC, 2010). Consequently, the popularity of these new drugs, referred to as conventional drugs, rose at the expense of herbal drugs. Conventional drugs have two classes namely: prescription drugs and over-the-counter-drugs. Prescription drugs are only available to patients strictly on prescription by a certified physician while over-the-counter-drugs are easily obtained from pharmacies, shops or even supermarkets without anyone prescription their dosage (FDA, 2011). Quality Control The active components of herbal medicines are mostly not clearly defined, and their use is widely unregulated in many countries. Important to health as they may be, it is critical to note that overuse or underuse of these supplements could have grave health repercussions if consumed over a long period. Governments should fund research projects to identify and clearly classify herbal medicines to assure consumers of both their safety and efficacy so as to avoid ill effects emanating from these remedies. In addition, the growing, harvesting, storage and processing of these drugs should be monitored to ensure they are hygienic and do not cause severe side effects.

The climate, soil quality and the general environment where these herbs grow affect the quality of the herbal drugs (Hanson, Venturelli and Fleckenstein, 2011). As such, they should be grown in standardized conditions so that their active ingredients can be accurately verified. Both over-the-counter-drugs and prescription drugs are well regulated for quality by the FDA but, more control should be done on generic drugs whose efficacy is also low compared to the original drugs. Resistance Drugs that just reduce the symptoms but not eliminate the causative agent result in development of resistance especially if the agent is a microbe like bacteria. The availability of over-the-counter-drugs in shops increases drug resistance especially where there is under does of drugs. Ease of access to these drugs also results in resistance as their effect is reduced when people take them for the wrong ailment. Many people confuse diseases based on similarity of symptoms, and this is what results in resistance and drug inefficacy. The same case applies for herbal remedies that people usually use without consulting medical experts. Since herbs contain active ingredients, they should be accurately confirmed to avoid resistance or damaging effects to the consumer (FDA, 2011). Accessibility Prescription drugs are inaccessible to the poor due to their prohibitive prices. Though more effective, many still use over-the-counter-drugs as they are cheaper and easier to acquire. For a correct dosage of these drugs, the sale of over-the-counter-drugs should be limited to pharmacies where the dealers would be required to employ professionals to offer any assistance required. Those working as pharmacists have the role of observing patients' signs and symptoms keenly before administering drugs. Penalties should be levied on scrupulous or unlicensed

dealers since this is a matter of national concern. To ensure accessibility to stronger and more effective drugs, the government should ensure their affordability by subsidizing their costs. Research on herbal drugs should be intensified since the current trends with the shift towards everything organic have made many people explore herbal options (UMMC, 2011). Drug Misuse There should be an age limit for accessing over-the-counter-drugs to prevent teenagers from abusing them. Teenagers are more likely to abuse over-the-counter-drugs since they are both easily accessible and affordable. The elderly, on the other hand, are more likely to abuse herbal remedies as they believe that herbs are less harmful based on their organic nature. In addition, they believe that herbal medicines can increase the quality and length of life (Hanson, Venturelli and Fleckenstein, 2011). To reduce and control misuse, widespread public education needs should take place with the government funding the project. Such forums need to look into recommended drugs and the counter effects of misuse and abuse of drugs whether herbal or contemporary. Conclusion Important as they are, over the counter and herbal medicines should be regulated by the FDA. Laws are also beneficial in imposing stiffer penalties to prevent unscrupulous traders from selling prescription drugs over the counter. This will also prevent teenagers from accessing the same drugs. In addition, the public should also be warned against unregulated use of drugs. Finally, the ASQ (American Society for Quality) needs to ensure that no substandard drugs are sold in the market.