

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Assessment of patient perception about generic and branded medicine

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ABSTRACT

Background: Generic drugs have an important place in health care because they are less expensive and mimic the original drug in terms of the active ingredients, dose, dosage form, and bioequivalence. The present study was conducted to assess patient perception about generic vs. branded medicine.

Materials & Methods: 120 patients of both genders were provided with a questionnaire which comprised of knowledge about difference between generic and branded medicines, attitude for buying generic medicines over branded medicines and practice of taking generic medicines.

Results: Out of 120 patients, males were 55 and females were 65. 71% have heard about generic medicine, 65% knew that there is price difference between generic and branded medicine, 68% prefer buying generic medicines over branded medicines, 30% have ever asked their doctor to prescribe generic medicines, 32% have demanded chemist to give generic medicines in place of branded medicines, 64% knew there a difference in the quality of generic medicine and branded variant, 61% knew that there a difference in the price of generic and branded medicines, the type of medicines doctors prefer to prescribe was generic medicines in 26% and branded medicines in 74%, the drug chemist prefer to sell was generic medicines in 22% and branded medicines in 78%, generic medicines in 80% and branded medicines in 20% were prescribed in this hospital, Indian government promote generic medicines in 45% and branded medicines in 55%, 32% were aware of any government rules regarding generic or branded medicines. The difference was significant ($P < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Knowledge and attitude about generic medicines among participants were poor.

Key words: attitude, branded, generic medicines

INTRODUCTION

Generic medicine is identical or bioequivalence to an innovator or product brand name drug in dosage, form, safety, strength, route of administration, quality, performance, characteristics and intended use.¹ Generic drugs have an important place in health care because they are less expensive and mimic the original drug in terms of the active ingredients, dose, dosage form,

and bioequivalence. They are copies of the original drugs that have exactly the same intended use, effects and side effects, route of administration, risks, safety, and strength as the original drug.²

The branded medicines are a bit costlier than the generic ones and hence enhanced usage of generic medicines would reduce the costs without sacrificing the quality of the medicines.³ Across the globe, regions like the USA, Europe, India and many low and middle-income countries are pushing toward the use of generic drugs to cut down the healthcare cost and financial burden. Pharmaceutical companies hold international patent rights which give them the exclusive right to produce a new drug for a specific period, which may run into decades after its development.⁴ It is only after the lapse of the patent that generic formulations are allowed into the market according to the current drug production laws.⁵ World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the essential medicines should be freely accessible and affordable to the population but the literature search has revealed an unfavorable perception of patients regarding generic medicines.^{6,7} The present study was conducted to assess patient perception about generic vs. branded medicine.

MATERIALS & METHODS

The present study comprised of 120 patients of both genders. All were informed regarding the study and their written consent was obtained.

Data pertaining to patients such as name, age, gender etc. was recorded. A questionnaire was designed which comprised of knowledge (difference between generic and branded medicines), attitude (attitude for buying generic medicines over branded medicines) and practice of taking generic medicines (asking doctor or pharmacist to prescribe generic medicines etc.). The response of each patient was recorded. Data thus obtained were subjected to statistical analysis. P value < 0.05 was considered significant.

RESULTS

Table I Distribution of patients

Total- 120		
Gender	Males	Females
Number	55	65

Table I shows that out of 120 patients, males were 55 and females were 65.

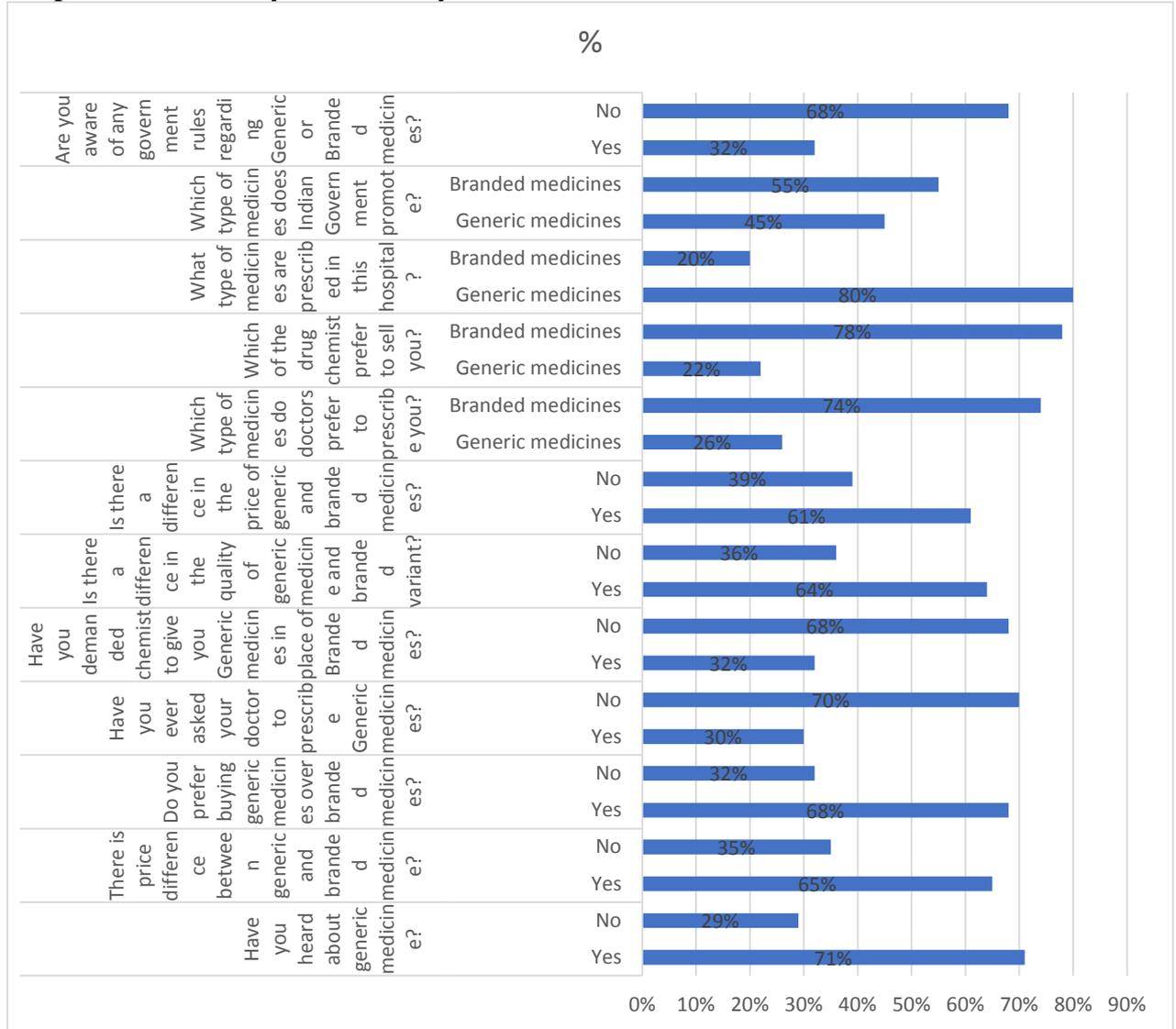
Table II Patients' response about questionnaire

Questionnaire	Response	%	P value
Have you heard about generic medicine?	Yes	71%	0.01
	No	29%	
There is price difference between generic and branded medicine?	Yes	65%	0.02
	No	35%	
Do you prefer buying generic medicines over branded medicines?	Yes	68%	0.03
	No	32%	
Have you ever asked your doctor to prescribe Generic medicines?	Yes	30%	0.03
	No	70%	
Have you demanded chemist to give you Generic medicines in place of Branded medicines?	Yes	32%	0.03
	No	68%	
Is there a difference in the quality of generic medicine and branded variant?	Yes	64%	0.02
	No	36%	
Is there a difference in the price of generic and branded medicines?	Yes	61%	0.05
	No	39%	

Which type of medicines do doctors prefer to prescribe you?	Generic medicines	26%	0.01
	Branded medicines	74%	
Which of the drug chemist prefer to sell you?	Generic medicines	22%	0.02
	Branded medicines	78%	
What type of medicines are prescribed in this hospital?	Generic medicines	80%	0.01
	Branded medicines	20%	
Which type of medicines does Indian Government promote?	Generic medicines	45%	0.18
	Branded medicines	55%	
Are you aware of any government rules regarding Generic or Branded medicines?	Yes	32%	0.02
	No	68%	

Table II, graph I shows that 71% have heard about generic medicine, 65% knew that there is price difference between generic and branded medicine, 68% prefer buying generic medicines over branded medicines, 30% have ever asked their doctor to prescribe generic medicines, 32% have demanded chemist to give generic medicines in place of branded medicines, 64% knew there a difference in the quality of generic medicine and branded variant, 61% knew that there a difference in the price of generic and branded medicines, the type of medicines doctors prefer to prescribe was generic medicines in 26% and branded medicines in 74%, the drug chemist prefer to sell was generic medicines in 22% and branded medicines in 78%, generic medicines in 80% and branded medicines in 20% were prescribed in this hospital, Indian government promote generic medicines in 45% and branded medicines in 55%, 32% were aware of any government rules regarding generic or branded medicines. The difference was significant ($P < 0.05$).

Graph I Patients' response about questionnaire



DISCUSSION

Health-care expenditure mainly owing to the escalating costs of drugs has been on the rise in most countries over the past few decades.⁸ One of the reasons for elevated drug expenditures is the rising rate of physicians recommending the more costlier original drugs and fewer generic drugs. Pharmaceutical companies hold international patent rights which give them the exclusive right to produce a new drug for a specific period, which may run into decades after its development.⁹ It is only after the lapse of the patent that generic formulations are allowed into the market according to the current drug production laws.¹⁰ Physicians often refer to original drugs by their brand names, resulting in these drugs being widely prescribed even when less expensive bioequivalent generic alternatives are available.¹¹ The present study was conducted to assess patient perception about generic vs. branded medicine. We found that out of 120 patients, males were 55 and females were 65. Tripathi et al¹² observed that 72 % participants heard about generic medicines and 65% knew the difference between generic and branded medicines. 67% agreed that generic medicines are cheaper than branded medicines but only 35% of them preferred to buy generic medicines. Most (64%) of the patients never asked his/her doctor or pharmacist (59%) to prescribe/ distribute generic medicines. Majority of them (61%) believed that generic medicines have lower quality than

branded medicines. According to patients, 45% responded that doctors preferred branded medicines over generic medicines. In this hospital, 37% patients were prescribed generic medicines. Most of them (67%) did not become aware of the government rules about prescribing generic medicines. Only 24% responded that government should promote generic medicines. According to 13% of patients suggest that there should be more generic medicine shops present in the hospital. Interestingly, 45% of them suggested that generic medicines should be available in all medicine shops.

We observed that 71% have heard about generic medicine, 65% knew that there is price difference between generic and branded medicine, 68% prefer buying generic medicines over branded medicines, 30% have ever asked their doctor to prescribe generic medicines, 32% have demanded chemist to give generic medicines in place of branded medicines, 64% knew there a difference in the quality of generic medicine and branded variant, 61% knew that there a difference in the price of generic and branded medicines. Charan et al¹³ assessed knowledge and perception of generics among patients visiting the outpatient department. Among 345 patients, only 33.6% reportedly heard about generics. Of these only a few patients (60%) believed that generics are safe. Those who were not willing to take generics reported efficacy as the major concern. Out of various factors that may affect knowledge of generic drugs, young age (OR = 5.3) and education (Primary (OR = 8.01), Secondary (OR = 6.19), and Higher secondary (OR = 3.07) were statistically significant.

The type of medicines doctors prefer to prescribe was generic medicines in 26% and branded medicines in 74%, the drug chemist prefer to sell was generic medicines in 22% and branded medicines in 78%, generic medicines in 80% and branded medicines in 20% were prescribed in this hospital, Indian government promote generic medicines in 45% and branded medicines in 55%, 32% were aware of any government rules regarding generic or branded medicines. Singh et al¹⁴ analyzed the beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of health-care providers in a tertiary-care hospital toward generic and original drugs. Of 200 participants, 62% supported generic substitution for original drugs in most cases, 60 (30%) supported generic substitutions for original drugs in all cases where generics were available, and 16 (8%) did not support generic substitution for original drugs. One hundred and seventeen (58.5%) participants perceived that there was significant difference between price of generic and original brand drugs. Although 56% participants believed that generic drugs are as effective as originals, 56% participants also mentioned that they have experienced difference in the quality of generic drugs against original brand drugs.

The limitation the study is small sample size.

CONCLUSION

Authors found that knowledge and attitude about generic medicines among participants were poor.

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