Abstract

Objective: The purpose of the study was to assess pharmacists’ current practice, perception and knowledge towards the use of herbal products in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). The study assessed the need for incorporating herbal medicine as a separate topic in undergraduate pharmacy student curricula. Methods: The study was done on 600 pharmacists employed in Abu Dhabi, who were contacted electronically, out of which 271 had completed the survey. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Results: Pharmacists’ use of herbal products is high in the UAE, as they have a high belief on the effectiveness of herbal products, and only age was found to be the most predominant variable that was influencing pharmacists’ personal use of herbal products (p-value=0.0171). Pharmacists were more knowledgeable on the uses/indications of herbal products (47%) rather than on other areas. Knowledge of the dispensing mode (prescription only or over the counter medicines) mandated by the Ministry of Health was quite good, however, it is to be noted that the source of information on the dispensing mode was provided by medical representatives (48%). Knowledge of dispensing mode of herbal products was found to be significantly influenced by the place of work with more knowledge of the dispensing mode by pharmacists working in the private sector (p-value 0.0007). The results from the study also underscores the need for including herbal medicine as a separate topic in pharmacy college curriculum and to provide for more seminars and continuing pharmacy education programs targeting pharmacists in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Conclusions: Pharmacists need to be informed on indications, drug interactions, adverse events and precautions of herbal products. Concerned bodies must also provide them with regular continuing education programs apart from putting their efforts to incorporate relevant topics on herbal medicine in the pharmacy students’ curriculum.

Keywords
Herbal Medicine, Education, Pharmacy, United Arab Emirates.