Objective: To document the case management of uncomplicated malaria fever at community pharmacies located in the two major cities of Pakistan; Islamabad (national capital) and Rawalpindi (twin city). Method: A comparative, cross-sectional study was designed to document the management of uncomplicated malaria fever at community pharmacies in twin cities of Pakistan through simulated patient visits. Visits were conducted in 238 randomly selected pharmacies to request advice for a simulated patient case of malaria. The pharmacy's management was scored on a checklist including history taking and provision of advice and information. Kruskal-Wallis test and Mann-Whitney U test were used to compare management of uncomplicated malaria fever by different types of dispensers working at community pharmacies situated at different locations in the twin cities. Results: The simulated patients were handled by salesmen (74.8%, n=178), pharmacist (5.4%, n=13) and diploma holders (19.8 %, n=47). Medication was dispensed in 83.1 % (n=198) of the visits, but only few of the treated cases were in accordance to standard treatment guidelines for malaria. However, in 14.8% (n=35) of the cases the simulated patients were directly referred to a physician. There was a significant difference observed in the process of history taking performed by different dispensers (e.g. pharmacist, pharmacy assistant, pharmacy diploma holders and salesman) while no significant differences in the provision of advice by these dispensers was observed. Pharmacists were seen more frequently involved in the process of history taking if available at the community pharmacies. On the other hand, no significant differences were observed in the case management (history taking and provision of advice) for the treatment of malaria fever among community pharmacies situated at different locations (e.g. near hospital/super market/small market) in the twin cities. Conclusion: The results of the study revealed that the overall process of disease management of uncomplicated malaria fever at community pharmacies was not in accordance with the national standard treatment guidelines for malaria. Patients were being treated by untrained personnel's at community pharmacies without any understanding of referral. However, pharmacists were more frequently involved in history taking, though their availability was low at community pharmacies.
Keywords
Community Pharmacy Services, Directive Counseling, Malaria, Pharmacies, Professional Practice, Patient simulation, Pakistan.