Abstract

Background: Advertising is a crucial component of pharmaceutical industry promotion. Research indicates that information on advertisement materials might be inadequate, inaccurate, biased, and misleading. Objective: To analyse and critically assess the information presented in print pharmaceutical advertisements in Saudi Arabia. Methods: Pharmaceutical advertisements were collected from 280 community pharmacies in Riyadh city, Saudi Arabia. The advertisements were evaluated using criteria derived from the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) regulation, the World Health Organization (WHO) ethical medicinal drug promotion criteria, and other principles reported in similar studies. The data were extracted independently by two of the researchers using a standardized assessment form. Results: One hundred eighty five printed advertisements were included in the final sample. Approximately half of the advertisements (n = 94, 51%) were for over-the-counter (OTC) medications, and 71 (38%) were for prescription-only medication. Information such as the name of active ingredients was available in 168 (90.8%) advertisements, therapeutic uses were mentioned in 156 (98.7%) of analysed advertisements. Safety information related to side effects, precautions, and major interactions were stated in 53 (28.5%), 58 (31%), and 33 (16.5%) advertisements, respectively. Only 119 advertisements (64%) provided references for information presented. Conclusions: Our findings suggest that print advertisements do not convey all the information necessary for safe prescribing. These results have implications for the regulation of drug advertising and the continuing education of pharmacists.

Keywords

Advertising as Topic, Drug Industry,
Pharmacies, Pharmacists, Saudi Arabia